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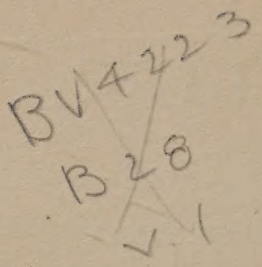

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SERMONS, OUTLINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

FOR SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Approaching Dawn.

The day is at hand. ROMANS xiii. 12.

THERE is a difference between the apostle's view of the next life and that which existed before his time, and that, perhaps, which exists in our own time. The heathens spoke of the next life as the world of shadows: the apostle speaks of it as a world of light. Many Christians have, at different times, spoken of the day of judgment as a day of gloom and darkness: the apostle speaks of it as of a glorious sunrise. All of us must feel at times overwhelmed with the thought of the uncertainty and dimness of all the details of the future state. Even in the Bible there is an almost total silence. Lazarus has told us nothing. The Lord himself speaks of it only in figure and parable. The distinct images of it which were formed in the Middle Ages, and which are described by the great poet Dante—the subterraneous circles of the infernal regions, the mountain of purgatory at the antipodes, and the spheres of flowers and the splendours of paradise—these have long ago faded from our minds. Yet, in spite of this darkness—in the midst of all this blank, we hear the apostle saying that the day is at hand. It is the present mortal existence which he regards as the shadows of night: it is the future existence which he regards as clear with the brightness of daylight.

I. First, is there anything which can in any degree enable us to imagine how a man's life can be brought under the searching trial of a superior intelligence—how a judgment long delayed may, at last, dawn upon him, and disclose to all the world, without a shadow of doubt, the things done in his life, whether they were good, or whether they were evil. There is one such sight which can hardly fail to furnish such a picture. Did you ever witness the solemn spectacle of a great trial, especially a trial of life and death in an English court of justice? If you have, I feel sure that it must have reminded you of what you have heard of that awful day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and the evil in each man's nature is divided from the good. The highest manifestation of earthly justice is a likeness of the great day of doom as it is spoken of in the Bible, because it shows us that even by human means, and by human justice, the just award can at last be given. Murder, as we say, comes out at last. Justice may have leaden feet: she lingers long; but she has iron hands, and even in this life the judgment may be pronounced which will disclose all secrets, and give a righteous sentence. Such a spectacle—such an event, whether we hear of it, or whether we see it, is a warning to us against all those hasty, careless, superficial sentences which we are in the habit of pronouncing on this

or that individual—on this or that opinion—on this or that institution, without care or deliberation. But it is also proved to us that there are cases where a decision can be made,—where the clearing up of earthly perplexities and the judgment according to truth can at last be seen,—where we see the point at which, it may be, long-tried virtue may have given way to sad temptation, or at which successful villainy has attained its end,—at which a judgment has been given which renders to every man according to his deeds.

II. But we may ask, yet further, is it possible—can we conceive—that not merely the records of some tremendous crime, but that the deeds, the words, the thoughts of each individual human being can be recalled from that forgotten abyss in which they are now buried? Can we conceive that out of that depth, deeper than ever plummet sounded, by a resurrection more wonderful, as it would seem, than the gathering of the dry bones of the dead, those departed—those innumerable memories can be raised up? Few, indeed, are the signs which we can trace of such a possibility in this our limited state of existence; yet even of this the records of our natural life have from time to time given most startling intimations. There are instances of men, in the moment of death, seeing in that one moment the whole of their past life brought before them, 'their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another;' as if they were, to use the very words of the apostle, 'in the day of Jesus Christ.'

III. But we ask yet further how, out of this endless succession of thoughts and works and deeds—out of this infinite and complex tissue of human actions—how shall we imagine that a just judgment can be pronounced on the true character of any human being, much more on the characters of the multitude which day by day, and hour by hour, and moment by moment, is passing into that awful presence? Most difficult, indeed, it is to conceive, and by its very difficulty it ought to prevent any human soul from attempting positively to judge himself, much more from attempting to judge his neighbour. Yet even here some of the more decisive acts and movements of human affairs do give us a faint insight to what may be hereafter. Look at some of those great events to which our Lord Himself compares His final coming—those revolutions of nations—those struggles of life and death which disclose, as nothing else can disclose, the strength and the weakness, the good and the evil, which lie wrapped up in the heart of the people or the individual men of whom that people is composed. Such an event is a crisis, that is to say, a judgment (for it is indeed the very same word)—a separation of the chaff and the grain—of the tares from the wheat. Then we, for the moment at least, discern what are the opinions, the characters, the institutions which are good for something or which are good for nothing—what

are those which will not stand fire—what are those which must be burned into ashes, or which will live for ever. Then we also see the strength and the presence of mind and the honesty and the courage and the charity, of which, perhaps, before we knew nothing, flashing like the lightning from a dark cloud. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' All such things, all such critical events, show us, perhaps, we never knew before, of what stuff we and our brethren are really made.

IV. I ask whether there are any signs in this mortal existence of a better day—of a good time—coming to all of us. 'Watchman,' we may well ask, 'what of the night? Watchman, what are we to expect from this long, dismal night, as it is to many of us, of sorrow and distress?' We are as those who watch for the morning. We look for any streaks of light on the mountain heights which may encourage us to hope that the whole curtain of mist which hangs around us may at last vanish away. Yes, there are such signs. There is the great sign of the world's progress on the whole. In the course of ages we have lost much, but we have also gained much. We have gained more than we have lost. We have lost Judaism: we have lost the Parthenon; we have lost the Roman empire; but we have gained Christianity. We have lost much of art, but we have gained more of science. We have lost, it may be, a united church; but we have gained a living church. We have lost many of the signs of religion, but we have gained a deeper insight to its substance.

A. P. STANLEY,
Penny Pulpit, New Series, No. 990.

The Coming Dawn.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. ROMANS xiii. 12.

TAKE the words as they stand, and you have the simple statement of a simple fact. Souls are born into the world, and souls pass out of it. Men eat and drink and sleep and wake, but the mighty revolutions—unceasing as they are resistless, resistless as they are unceasing—of the great wheels of Time, go steadily on. Time stands not still. To us this may be an unwelcome truth, but the truth it remains. 'The night is far spent,' and not all the powers of earth can keep it from waning; 'the day is at hand,' and nothing in the whole wide world can hinder its dawning, or delay it by a single hour.

There are few of us who have not at some time or other in our lives felt our utter helplessness in presence of the steady flight of

Time. There have been times when we felt that we would gladly give all we possessed in the world if we could but delay the sunset by twenty minutes, or hasten the sunrise by half-an-hour. But we knew that it was a wild, impossible longing. Time in his course is inexorable, and full well we knew it.

We all have our dreams about the future; we have all drawn pictures of what it is likely to be, or what we would wish it to be. We all have our hopes, or plans, or expectations, or apprehensions concerning it. And it is according to our expectations concerning the future that we find ourselves awaiting it—according as we hope to welcome it or expect to shrink from it, that we are affected by the thought that Time is passing, and that no power on earth can for a moment stay his course.

And so it comes that the words mean much more to some than they do to others; that to one on this side the street it may be a message of life, to another, on that side, a sentence of death, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand!' Just according to what one expects to hear, see, do, suffer, enjoy when the day is come.

II. But what I want particularly to notice is this—that, welcome or unwelcome, cruel or kind, the fact remains. *Whatever* it may involve, *whatever* it bring to this one or to that, the day will come just the same. Nothing can prevent it.

To-day, this first Sunday in Advent, a cry rings through the world: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand!'

Picture a vast encampment, pitched in the hollow of surrounding hills. Here a mighty host is lying. But though the army is in an enemy's country—an enemy, powerful, cunning, cruel—we are astonished to notice an entire absence of all military discipline and watchfulness. Instead of strong pickets and outposts regularly visited, we see here and there a sentinel left quite to himself. Evening comes on; the sun goes down; the darkness falls. Still no precautions! And now there come stealing into the camp emissaries of the foe, bringing with them abundance of wine, and promises of seductive pleasures. Soon the whole camp is demoralised. Sounds of feasting and drinking and riot fill the air. The sentinels are keeping but a lazy look-out, or are sleeping at their posts. Yet not all. One, who is posted on a neighbouring height, is filled with pain and dismay as the sounds reach him from below.

And now there comes a faint glimmer of light in the eastern sky. The sentinel can keep silence no longer. The camp is still enough now; but he knows that it is the stillness of lethargy and deathlike sleep. He gathers up all his energies; loud and long his cry rings out. He knows indeed that hundreds will not hear it—hundreds only too late—'The night is far spent, the day is at hand!'

That camp is the Christian world. The sentinel on the heights, S. Paul, crying aloud to the Christians of his own day. To-day the unsleeping, watchful sentinel is the Church. She echoes his cry; she will rouse men if she can. There are streaks in the eastern sky; there is a great Day coming.

It will come. When, I know not; wise men know not; the saints at rest know not; the angels know not; but the Great God knoweth. 'And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, . . . blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.'

J. B. C. MURPHY,
Through Feast and Festival, p. 1.

The Warning Call.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ROMANS xiii. 12.

I. AS if, when the light is just about to shine forth in the morning, some friend should come to the room where a man is sleeping, and stir him up, to prepare himself and be ready to set about his day's work; so does the Apostle in this and every Advent, knock at the door of our hearts. This time of ours on earth, which is in comparison but a night, not showing things as they really are, full of temptations and hindrances to the doing of God's work, this our earthly time is far spent: the day, the open and clear day of the other world, is at hand. The darkness of the evil world will soon pass, and Jesus Christ the true Light will shine forth, to wake us all up, whether we be willing or no.

II. Our clothes are called 'armour,' because our condition in the world is a warfare, and continual war against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and our calling is that of soldiers. How is the Christian to put the armour on? By good thoughts and good resolutions; considering beforehand what he will have to do to-day; what temptations he is likely to meet with, and how he may best prepare against them. The night of our world is far spent; the day of God's world is at hand. In His own time He will be here; even now He stands at the door and knocks, and very soon He will be in the room. Let us beware lest, coming suddenly, He should find us sleeping.

J. KEBLE,
Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve, p. 229.

ADVENT SUNDAY

The Armour of Light

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ROMANS xiii. 12.

THE Second Coming of Christ into the world, which fills so prominent a position in the teaching of our Church, exercises but little practical influence upon religious life in our own day. It was not so when the Apostle Paul thus appealed to the Second Advent.

In the preceding verses S. Paul inculcates various duties—the duty of obedience to the State authorities; the duty of keeping the Commandments; the duty of Christian love. These duties he enforces by a consideration of the utmost importance, even that of the coming of the Lord. 'Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.' Doubtless, the effect of this consideration, so frequently and so forcibly impressed upon Christian converts, was prodigious; an expectation so awful in some of its aspects, so joyous in others, so momentous in all, vividly realised as it was by the Apostles themselves, necessarily directed Christian hopes, fashioned Christian life, and moulded Christian teaching.

That the belief has the same practical influence at the present day can scarcely be maintained. *Then*, men were deeply stirred by the strangeness and novelty of the declaration; *now*, the keenness of their interest is dulled by long familiarity with an announcement repeated in the same language for centuries. The temperature of their belief has been chilled.

Nor can it be said that Christians of our day are so practically influenced by the truth as to be distinguished from the rest of the world by walking honestly, as in the day. We cannot point to them and say, These are men who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. More truthfully, I fear, might the Divine lament be repeated, 'My people doth not know; My people doth not consider.' Our minds can scarcely be concentrated upon matters of gravest import which fall within our daily experience; how much more difficult is it to excite an interest in those which require anxious thoughts to apprehend, and deep faith to realise?

I. Special times, appropriate seasons, particular occasions arise, when this subject of Advent assumes colossal form and vivid reality. Seen in the light of sickness, danger, or disaster, it takes startling

and majestic proportions; it not merely passes across the mind, but absorbs, occupies, and fills it with a solemn awe. Heard at such moments, the words, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand,' ring in upon our ears with such a volume of sound that our brains reel and stagger.

These are indeed rays of glory, which dart in upon the mind like the bright beams of morning, chasing the darkness of night—sudden inspirations that challenge believers to wait with patience, and yet expect with eagerness, the coming of the Day of God. But, alas! how rare are these gleams! How far rarer are the men who are so moved by these visions of the great Day as habitually to prepare for its coming! How small the handful of those who, with varying shades of belief, live and act and speak as if they believed that it might come on them at any moment! How vast the multitude, on whose life it has not the slightest influence, who practically treat it as if it were wasted time to spare a single thought to its consideration!

II. The doctrine of the Advent of Christ to judge the world rests upon evidence as sure, and statements as plain, as any other received mystery of Scripture. And experience shows us that men who accept the truth and hopefully anticipate its literal fulfilment, gain an incitement to watchfulness and to carefulness of life, which those wholly lack who think that the only true fulfilment is to be expected in the summons of each individual soul from life to judgment. The conviction that any day—this very night, or to-morrow—may witness the close of this present Dispensation, the belief that we with our bodily eyes may behold our Lord in glory, as surely as they looked upon Him who persecuted and pierced Him, are habits of mind powerfully calculated to affect our lives, to solemnise our thoughts and actions.

III. There can be no doubt that the anticipation of that Day was to the Apostle a source of strength and of gladness. It was an expectation which cheered him in the midst of his trials. It is in sad contrast with our unbelief, or half-belief. It suggests inquiry into the true reasons of the startling dissimilarity of our attitude towards the Second Advent. S. Paul knew indeed that he himself should pass from death unto life before the Day of which he speaks arrived Yet still he looked and longed for Christ's coming, or the day of his going to Christ, with infinite hope, and without a shade of fear Either event completed his salvation; either event was gain.

It is far different with most of us. We anticipate with no such satisfaction the fate which inevitably awaits us all. We contemplate with no such longing, the appearance of Christ in glory before we shuffle off our mortal coil. It is not a doubt of the truth of the

doctrine, it is not a disbelief in its efficacy, that makes us so sedulously ignore the Second Advent. No; it is because we have not assumed the armour of light. In fact, our opposition to the doctrine of Christ's Advent springs from the same cause as our repugnance to death itself. Death is for most of us a subject of unmingled terror. With no less terror do we expect the Advent of Christ. We have no heart for either, because our hearts are wholly *here*. This life to most of us, spite of its many sorrows, is strangely full of sweetness. We are loth to leave it; for then we pass to a condition, the wondrous beauty of which our feeble belief can but faintly realise. We cannot willingly exchange what we consider the realities of this life for those which our faith has never embodied in any definite or substantial form. And so we mourn, with almost hopeless sorrow, for those who go before us, as if the world beyond the grave offered nothing comparable to the joys they leave behind. In fine, both for ourselves and others, we dread death as the event most truly to be feared, and most eagerly to be averted. Old age is lonely. It is accompanied by many infirmities, which are often intensified by poverty. Our old companions in arms have left us, our founts of happiness are cut off at their very source, yet still we cling to life as death approaches. We clasp all our miseries and disappointments to our bosoms, as though they were precious possessions from which we cannot bear to be separated.

IV. Love is 'the armour of light.' Reject it not because of its simplicity. This love is that very 'armour of light' in which men will be found best and most safely arrayed. It is the glory of the best and the saintliest of men. It has made the world what it is in all its highest and best aspects. It is the whole armour of God. Let us put it on and wear it as long as we are here in this mortal life.

H. PROTHERO,
The Armour of Light, p. 1.

The Doctrine of S. Paul.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. ROMANS xiii. 12, 13, 14.

IT has been observed what advantage is given to any speaker or teacher who takes his stand, not merely on his powers of teaching or speaking, but on some famous deed that he has done, some long experience that he has won, even some great hereditary name and

ancestry. We are hushed into silence even before he begins to speak, we listen to what he tells us with an interest independent of his actual words; what he has done is a pledge to us that what he says is worth receiving. So it is with many passages of Scripture. They come down to us, not only armed with their Divine authority, not only relying on their intrinsic excellence, but invested with a long train of recollections, bearing with them the trophies and spoils of the strong men of the earth whom they have vanquished, calling upon us to listen to them by virtue of the victories they have already achieved. Such is the passage which closes the Epistle of this day's service. Doubtless every Advent as it comes round brings with its impressive and consoling accents something that moves some one soul that was never moved before; and when the great day arrives which shall disclose the secrets of all hearts, when every deed and word of man shall give up its account to God, this text will lay before the throne thousands whom it has caused to awake out of sleep, to cast away the deeds of darkness, and to put on the armour of light.

I. Let us remember the great importance attached by the Apostle himself to the practical portions of his Epistles. In saying this, we do not disparage any other part. Most instructive is the representation of the Apostle's personal feelings; most useful for the history and government of the Church his directions as to worship, and order, and teaching; most interesting, even when most difficult, his controversies with Jew and Gentile which have furnished so many a text of controversy to Christians of later times. Nor, again, need we separate the two portions of his teaching asunder, as if one did not bear upon the other. Nothing is less practical than a mere moral essay.—We often read the story, and miss the moral,—we often learn more from a deed, from a look, from a gesture, of a good man, than from many precepts. But it is the charm of these practical exhortations of S. Paul that they are *not* mere moral essays—they are *not* mere moral lessons attached to truths, which can be better understood without them. They are full of his own life and spirit; they are the outpouring of his innermost mind; they are the very flower and fruit of all that tangled undergrowth of thorny thickets, through which we struggle to arrive at these blessed conclusions.

What Luther once, in a hasty mood, of which he afterwards repented, said of the Epistle of S. James, that it was an epistle of straw, we are sometimes apt to think deliberately of all the practical portions of the Apostolical writings. We think them too easy, or too simple, to need our attention; we think that the other portions are the pure doctrine of the Apostle, 'gold, silver, and precious stones,' and that these are 'but as straw, hay, and stubble.'

So thought not the great S. Augustine when the practical words of the text went as a sword through his heart,—so thought not the blessed Apostle himself. Look at the place which they occupy in his writings. In almost every instance it is the final concluding portion,—the very place which, in our speeches, in our sermons, in our letters, we reserve for whatever we wish to be the most impressive, the most telling, the most striking of all that we have to say. And even where the general argument, as in the Epistles to Corinth, cannot be thus wound up, yet then each particular argument is interwoven with the same practical conclusion. We cannot escape from it. The Apostle would no more omit such moral exhortations in his Epistles, than preachers of modern days would omit to enforce whatever was to them the peculiar tenet or doctrine of their own peculiar sect. In other points his mode of dealing with the subject before him varies, according to times, and persons, and places. In this point, he is always the same with himself, and with his brother Apostles.

The distinction which we sometimes draw between the doctrinal and the practical portion of his Epistles was unknown to him. To him all was 'doctrine' alike; or rather, that was especially 'doctrine,' to which we now often deny the name. 'The form of doctrine' in which the Romans were instructed was that which made them 'free from sin and servants of righteousness.'[1] Those against whom he warned Timotheus as contrary to 'sound doctrine' were not teachers of erroneous opinions, but 'unholy and profane, murderers, menstealers, liars, perjurers.'[2] Christian principle and conduct was to him the noblest orthodoxy, unchristian practice was to him the worst heresy.

'Love,'[3] 'love to our neighbour as to ourselves,' is, as he says in the words immediately preceding the text, 'the fulfilling of the law.' 'Love,' we may also say, is 'the fulfilling of the Gospel.' It is the very doctrine into which the Gospel is drawn out,—it is the atmosphere in which the truths of the Gospel live and move, out of which they die and fade away.

II. And this brings me to the next point which makes these portions so necessary to be considered. They are amongst all the manifold displays of the Apostle's wisdom, those which exhibit a spirit the most purely *Evangelical*,—that is to say, they are the portions which most resemble, most closely unite us to the actual teaching of the Gospels themselves. Whatever difference may be exhibited between other portions of the Epistles and the Evangelical narratives, differences occasioned by peculiarities of time, place, and object, too long here to be examined, yet between *these* portions of the Epistles

[1] Rom. vi. 18. [2] 1 Tim. i. 9, 10. [3] Rom. xiii. 10.

and the Evangelical narratives there is absolutely no difference at all. The one is but the expansion, the application of the other: the spirit of the four Gospels breaks out in every sentence; here, at any rate, we feel that, in listening to the Apostle, we are listening to the very words and tones of Jesus Christ our Lord. Often the very same expressions recur: but even when the expressions are different, the spirit is the same. No one can mistake, for instance, that the climax of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in the description of Love or Charity, is the peculiar product of the Life and Teaching of Christ, and of no one else.

III. Yet, once more, if these chapters are most Apostolical and most Evangelical, they are also, in the fullest sense of the word, most Catholic. The other portions of the Epistles are useful for special occasions, for special classes of men. The philosophical student will delight in the depth and subtilty of the 7th and 9th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans; the historical student will turn to the lively descriptions of the early Church and of the character of the Apostle in the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians; the Pastoral Epistles will be read by those who have to teach and rule the Church. But all can equally delight in those parts of which I am now speaking. If the other portions of S. Paul's Epistles contain, as S. Peter says,[1] 'things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, to their own destruction'; if they are guarded by gigantic difficulties which stand at the entrance like the cherubs with the flaming sword to ward off rash intruders; these portions contain hardly anything but what he who runs may read; in this respect, as in so many others, approaching to the homely yet lofty and universal character of the teaching of our Lord Himself.

IV. Once more, these samples of the Apostolical teaching are not only most Catholic, but they are also, in the best sense of the word, most Protestant. There have been many corruptions and superstitions growing up in the Church in different times and countries. But there is one main corruption and superstition, against which it is our duty at all times and in all countries to *protest*. Every religious community, nay, every religious individual, is tempted to set the outward above the inward, the ceremonial above the spiritual, the feelings or the understanding above the conscience; to think more of sacrifice than of mercy, more of the blood of bulls and goats, more of mint, anise, and cummin, more of saying 'Lord, Lord,' than of justice, humility, and truth. Against this tendency, wheresoever shown, there is, if one may use the expression, an eternal *Protest*—an eternal *Protestantism*—enshrined in every part of Scripture, but nowhere more visible than in these chapters of the Apostolical Epistles. Let

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 16.

a man study them well, mark their supreme importance, drink in their spirit with his whole mind and soul; and then he will be proof against all the various errors which lead us to regard outward forms, or correct opinions, or religious emotions, as more pleasing in the sight of God than the Christian graces which the Apostle here urges upon us as the object of his whole teaching.

V. Yet further; these portions of Scripture exhibit, in a striking shape, a remarkable characteristic of all Scripture, its foresight, its anticipation of modern thoughts and wants most remote from the time when the words were written, but most near to our own. 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand.' So wrote the Apostle, in the expectation, as it would seem, of a closer approach of the latter days than was borne out by the actual event. Yet that very expectation seems to have been made the means, under God, of carrying him forward into the future; of placing him, as it were, in the midst of our own days, of our own trials, of our own questions.

VI. And, finally,—this teaching of the Apostle is the most important to all of us, because, in one word, it is the most *practical.* Not to the world at large only, but to each one amongst us, 'the night is far spent, the day is at hand.' Young and old, our time is passing away: we are every one of us drawing nearer to that day when we shall meet the Judge of all mankind. God knows that we have all need of mercy—of His infinite mercy. But not the less must we bear in mind that even our sense of God's mercy will be shaken unless it is accompanied by the sense of His eternal justice, of our eternal duty. This it is which is set before us by these practical chapters, these farewell entreaties, these solemn conclusions of the whole Apostolical doctrine. We may not limit the mercy of God—but neither may we invent any other way of salvation than that which He has appointed for us.

A. P. STANLEY,
Canterbury Sermons, p. 149.

The Night and the Day.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ROMANS xiii. 12.

THE Apostle calls this present time night, because the deeds of darkness are done in it, and because it does not shine as the coming day will, with the light shining from the Lord; but in another sense it is day, because 'now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.'

I. What is our work in preparation for the coming day?

To cast off the works of darkness. What are these? They are

the evil things called the works of the flesh in Gal. v. 19: 'Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like.' Now notice that in these works of the flesh, *i.e.* of darkness, there is not only adultery and fornication, but hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings.

II. How are these to be put off? By repentance—by confession, not only to God, but to our ministers, our neighbours, especially those we have injured: by faith looking to Christ as the great Healer, by determined resolution, by keeping out of the way of temptation, by unremitting watchfulness and prayer, by the use of Scripture, as did the Lord in His time of temptation (S. Matt. iv. 1-10). By using every means of grace, especially the Blessed Sacrament, the means by which our souls are strengthened and refreshed.

III. 'To put on the armour of light.' This armour is described in Eph. vi. A true belief in the Gospel, that is, the truth of Christ Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, and Ascended, is the only thing which can give us a sure footing. 'The shield of faith.' Faith alone can defend us. Whenever Satan attacks us with any insinuation against the Gospel, we must fall back upon that truth which is opposed to his fiery dart. The helmet of salvation is the hope of salvation, as in 1 Thess. v. 8. The sword of the Spirit—the Word of God, by which our Lord repelled the attacks of Satan (S. Matt. iv. 1-10).

M. F. SADLER,
Sermon Outlines, p. 14.

Putting on Christ.

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. ROMANS xiii. 14.

IT is very remarkable, when we come to consider it, how the great works of Almighty God, wrought for us, and in us, for our salvation, are typified (so to speak) by our own ordinary works, that we have to do every day. Our sleeping and waking, our lying down and rising up, our washing and dressing, our eating and drinking, our natural affections and endearing ways, one with another, as parents and children, brethren and sisters, husbands and wives; also our common every-day employments and relations, between masters and servants, debtors and creditors, buyers and sellers:—all these things are turned, by God's infinite condescension and mercy, into so many Divine parables, so many tokens to our souls from the great Lover of souls, to save them from ruin, or to make their salvation more glorious.

ADVENT SUNDAY

Just as wakening is a sign to us of the first conversion of the heart to God; and as rising up is a sign of both resurrections—our first resurrection in the regeneration of baptism, and our rising finally from the grave after death;—and as our washing ourselves in the morning is a token of the washing of baptism; so our putting on our clothes is the Scriptural type and image of baptismal sanctification; that renewing of the Holy Ghost, which S. Paul tells us of, when he says, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration,' which is also (for so his words mean) a washing 'of renewal by the Holy Ghost.' This great and miraculous change, on which our all depends for eternity, we do, as in figure, enact and rehearse, by that very simple and ordinary act of putting on our clothes in the morning.

I. For what is our natural state but a state of nakedness? 'We brought nothing into this world:' nothing, that is, of either earthly or spiritual clothing. Neither the fig-leaves of natural compunction and horror, nor the coats of skin provided by the Lord in the sacrifices and other works of penitence commanded in the Law, could at all clothe the soul again with that real holiness and righteousness which it lost when it consented to sin. That robe of true glory she might not any way put on again, except by being new-made, new-created in that image of God, after which she had been formed at the beginning. And that could only be by incorporation and ingrafting into Him Who vouchsafed to be our second Adam, Who took our manhood into God, *i.e.* into His own Divine Person; Who became incarnate for us men and for our salvation, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that we might be united, body and soul, to Him. As He is the express image of the Father's Person, so we must become one with Him, in order to recover the image in which we were made—the image of that Godhead which is common to the Father and the Son. Through Him and by Him alone can we be partakers of the Divine nature. And when we are made so, when a sinful man, through the Lord's unspeakable mercy, is new-made in Christ after God's image, then is fulfilled that which the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle, has taught us to call putting on Christ: 'putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.'

II. And it would seem that of this wonderful change, not only the clothing of priests in their holy garments, and of kings in their royal apparel, but the ordinary dressing of each one of us every morning, is made in Scripture a sort of type or token. Daily, when our sleep leaves us, and we are putting on our clothes, that we may be ready to go out into the world, and do the work of our several callings, we are, without knowing it, representing as in a parable the saving change which our Lord makes in His elect. Christ is not only our

light, our uprising, and our cleansing, but He is our clothing and our apparel also.

When our Lord came, He also in His parables announced from time to time the same gracious mystery,—of divine clothing to be provided for the soul. He said He would be a Father to His fallen and returning children, as in other respects, so in this, that He would order His servants to bring forth the best robe and put it upon each of them. His Church was to be a royal palace-hall, where a marriage feast should be holden for the king's son, and no man should come in thither, except he had on a wedding garment. And, accordingly, when He had cast the devils out of that unhappy person, who, being possessed with a whole legion, represented most exactly the miserable condition of those who are without God in the world, it is particularly mentioned, as one chief mark of the man's cure, that he was found sitting at the feet of Jesus, CLOTHED, and in his right mind. All these were, I suppose, so many hints of that which was soon to come to pass: that the Apostles, and those who by their means should be brought to Christ, should be 'endued,' that is, clothed, 'with power from on high,' with the Holy Ghost, Who is the great power of God; and that the Church, made up of such souls, was to be 'clothed with the sun,' with our Lord Christ Himself, the Sun of Righteousness.

III. If any one gave you a beautiful white robe, which not only hid your nakedness, but made you fair and glorious in the eyes of all, would this make you careless about keeping yourself clean? Would it not make you consider a little before you ventured into any place, or any company, where you would be likely to spoil it? If then, by the mercy of God, any one has a reasonable hope that he has been, so far, kept from serious and grievous sin, let him not be high-minded, but fear. 'Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments.' However rich and noble the robe may be, there is no blessing for him who does not watch over it.

And consider this also, that such as really delight in their apparel are apt to employ themselves, if they may, in making it still finer and more gorgeous. Persons who are fond of dress generally love to be adorning themselves more and more. In one way, we all have seen, many have experienced, a great deal too much of this; as when Christian women neglect the caution of S. Peter and S. Paul, and think too much of the outward ornaments of gold and pearls and costly array. But there is a great and holy lesson, which Scripture teaches us to draw from the sight of such things. The Prophet asks, 'Can a woman forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.' As if he should say, You know how diligent they are in continually devising new and more becoming fashions: and do they not thereby put to shame the

souls of Christians, the souls that are betrothed to Christ, for not taking pains to grow in grace, to improve themselves in that inward adorning, which is in the sight of God of great price? Whereas the mind of the true Church, the undefiled bride of Christ, is to be evermore making herself ready,—decking herself with inward ornaments, adorning herself with heavenly jewels: endeavouring to abound more and more in whatsoever will please her heavenly Lord, Him Who vouchsafes to be her beloved. And this is, in other words, putting on Christ more and more.

IV. We are always to be putting on Christ, if it were only for this plain and most serious reason,—that if we do not, we shall be clothing ourselves with a very different garment, even with the likeness of the evil one; with foul and accursed habits, which will make us more and more fit for the foul and accursed place, the outer darkness. This the holy Apostle signifies, in that after bidding us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, he adds, 'Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Let Jesus Christ and His righteousness—all His good and holy ways—be the dress which you put on every morning in the purpose of your heart, and do not either in mind or body be willingly like those who dress themselves with a view to bodily and sensual enjoyment, whose very clothing is a provision which they make for the satisfaction of their pride or lust. Be not ye like unto them, either in your outward dress, or in the habits of your mind and conduct. But you *will* be like unto them, unless you are diligently striving and praying to put on the contrary habits. For as we must wear some clothing, so our hearts and souls must be trained and habited in some way or other. If we are not trying to keep ourselves clean, we must be rendering ourselves daily more and more unclean.

J. KEBLE,
The Warnings of Advent, p. 34.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. ROMANS xiii. 14.

I. CHRIST our Lord comes into the world to restore the investiture we have lost, or rather to be Himself for us and upon us, all that our sin has cast away. The original word of Scripture represented in our English version by the word *atone*, or *make atonement*, literally means to cover. In this manner, Jesus the Lord comes to cover our sin; covering first our liabilities in the sins that are past, by the forbearance of God and the honour He confers on God's instituted justice by communicating to us in the penal scathing and curse of our transgressions, and secondly and principally, in the sense that He undertook to be the Divine character upon us. Yea, the Divine glory. For He does not merely teach us something, as many fancy, which we are to take

up notionally and copy item by item in ourselves, but He undertakes to copy Himself into us, and be the righteousness of God upon us.

II. But we are to put Him on. And here is the difficulty. You cannot see, it may be, how it is done. The very conception is unintelligible or mystical, and you cannot guess, it may be, what it means. What, then, does it mean to put on Christ?

It does not mean, of course, that you are only to make an experiment of putting on the garb of the new life and see how you will like it. No man puts on Christ for anything short of eternity. The end must be a finality; even at the beginning, whoever contemplates even the possibility of being without Him, or of ever being without Him again, does not put Him on.

Neither do you put Him on when you undertake to copy some one or more of the virtues or characters in Him—the gentleness, the love, the dignity—without being willing to accept the sacrifice in Him, to bear the world's contempt with Him, to be singular, to be noted, to go through your Gethsemane, and groan under the burdens of love. Neither do you put Him on when you undertake only to realise some previous conceptions of character that are your own. The dress is to be not from you, but from Him, the whole Christ, just as He is, taken upon you to shape you for the mould of His own Divine life and spirit.

III. But we must be more positive. First, then, there must be a free and hearty examination of your past life. As the Apostle words it in another place, you must put off the old man in order to put on the new. You cannot have the new character to put on over the old. We put Him on by faith—only by faith. For rest the soul comes to Him, shivering in the cold shame of its sin, and gives itself over to Him, to be loved, protected, covered in by His gracious life and passion. You will put on Christ by obedience to Him, for whoever obeys Christ willingly, trusts Him, and whoever trusts Him obeys Him. And you are always to be putting on Christ afterwards, as you begin to put Him on at first. All the success of your Christian life will consist in the closeness of your walk with Christ and the completeness of your trust in Him.

H. BUSHNELL,
Christ and His Salvation, p. 57.

Christ the Victory in Temptation.

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. ROMANS xiii. 14.

THESE sacred words, like most other utterances of Holy Scripture, are illuminated by their context. They stand in a paragraph which brings up the thought of weapons and of war. The Christian

man is called upon to be up and waking, not to consciousness only, but to action and to battle. He is to throw off the night-robe of the works of darkness, and to 'put on' instead 'the armour' and arms of light, and then in that accoutrement to move up and down amidst the realities of life. Strong and ready, watchful and victorious, he is to *walk*, to 'walk seemly, as in the day.'

This is the special reference stamped here upon the word 'put on.' The thought is not of a robe, rich and flowing. It is not of crown of king or wreath of victor. It is of coat of mail and cap of steel. It is of the knight panoplied for the dreadful field, or for the road through fens and forests, the haunt of robbers, and giants, and wild beasts. To put metaphors and similes apart, we look here at the Christian believer arming himself, as to his whole being, with what shall give him victory over sin; with what shall make him—not hereafter but now, not in Eden but in Babylon—more than conqueror against the devil, and the world, and the flesh.

Now think again, as in this context, of the phraseology of the immediate text. Here again is 'put ye on.' But here, for the armour, for the weapons, of the light, stands this astonishing equivalent and synonym—the Lord our Redeemer, the Person, the Self, of Jesus Christ. The imagery breaks down halfway, to let in at once this wonderful reality in its living truth—this blessed Being, in all the titles of His grace and power, not one designation left out—THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I. I point first to that severe and solid fact, the *need* of this putting on. I remind you of an old, an unalterable thing, the infinite holiness of God *versus* the all-pervading sinfulness of man. I point to that fathomless mystery, that hard, keen reality, the whispered 'I ought' met by the muttered 'I will not,' or at best, 'I do not.' I apprise you, as if it were news, of the deceitfulness of sin, of the self-delusion of the heart. I bring before you, as if never seen before, the absolute spirituality of the holy Law, piercing to the joints and marrow of the soul. I place its mirror, as of glass mingled with fire, before your life and before mine. I ask you to see there pictured, not now the cruder sort of sins, the ghastly blots and hideous weeds of impurity of act and word, things done and said in dens of vice, or planned and wrought in stifling solitude; no, nor now the opener forms of a gross self-indulgence, the flaccid deformities of a life manifestly earthy and of the earth. I ask you now to see in that microscopic mirror how looks the thought of foolishness, the resolve of petty selfishness, the miserable swell of most concealed self-praise, the burst of small impatience, the suppressed consciousness of neglected right and permitted wrong, the lack of love to the Lord that bought you; the tacit refusal to live out your life, which is not your own, to

Him; the non-response to His Spirit's strivings; the subtle preference of self to God in Christ which lurks in the kernel of every sin. Look at these things, I pray you, brethren, in the glass of the holy and absolutely immovable Will of the Eternal. And in that glass, in the background, see too the environments of influence and circumstance which do not *create* your sin, as they do not create yourselves, but which bear, as by a law of moral gravitation, upon your sinfulness; the pains and the pleasures, the cares and the ease, the crowd or the solitude, the blame or the praise, with which the Tempter works on your already tainted will.

II. 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' In face of the realities of sin, of Roman sin in Nero's day—but let us forget Rome and Nero; they were only dark accidents of a darker essence;—full in face of the realities of sin, S. Paul writes down across them all these words, this spell, this Name, the Lord Jesus Christ put on. Take a steady look, he seems to say, at the sore need in the light of God; but then, at once, look *here*, look off. Here is the more than antithesis to it all. Here is that by which you can be, nevertheless, more than conqueror. Take your iniquities at the worst; this can subdue them. Take your surroundings at the worst; this can emancipate you from their power. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the putting on of Him.

(1) First, then, the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself a Fact. He was, and being what He was, He is. The Christ of Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, is. Sure as is the existence now of His universal Church, as the observance of the historic Sacrament of His death, as the impossibility of Galilæan or Pharisaic imagination having *composed*, not photographed, the portrait of the Incarnate Son, of the Immaculate Lamb; sure as the glad verification in ten thousand blessed lives to-day of all, of all, that the Christ of Scripture undertakes to be to the soul that will take Him on His own terms—so sure, drawn across all oldest and all newest doubts of man, across all *gnosis* and all *agnosia*, lies the present fact of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) Then, secondly, it is a fact that man, in the mercy of God, can put Him on. He is not far off. He presents Himself to your touch, to your possession. He says to you, Come to Me. He unveils Himself as literal partaker of your nature, bone of your bone. He shows Himself to you as stricken and smitten, your Sacrifice of Peace, your Righteousness, through faith in His blood. He shines on you through the glory of His promises, as the Head and Lifespring, in an indescribable union, of the deep, calm tide of life spiritual and eternal, prepared to circulate through your being. He invites Himself to make His abode with you; *with* you, did

I say? Yes, but more: 'I will come *in* to him; I will dwell in his heart by faith.' In that ungovernable heart of ours, that interminably self-deceptive heart, He engages to reside, to be permanent Occupant, to be present Master. He is prepared thus to take, with regard to your will, a place of power nearer than all circumstances, and deep in the midst of all possible inward traitors; His eye upon their plots, His foot, not yours, upon their necks. Yes, He invites you thus to embrace Him into a full contact, to 'put Him on.' Or, freely to change the metaphor, not the truth, you can come to Him, led by His Spirit, and can find in that coming realities of result as strong as they are joyful: a power divinely personal working in you, resources not your own for purity, and peace, and victory, which are just in their essence this—the living presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as your well of life, your origin and cause of patience, of unselfishness, of strength for steadfast and prosaic duty, of ever new will and skill to work for Him, and for others as for Him.

H. C. G. MOULE,
Christ is All, p. 33.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

Hearing Christ.

And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
S. MATTHEW xxi. 10.

WE have here four representative classes. They reappear in all time.

I. The common people hear Christ gladly. Is it not true? Is there not, deep down in human society, a response to the Gospel wheresoever it is audible? Shame on a Church which leaves it unheard in highways and hedges! If the poor are not reached by the Gospel, the fault is theirs who miss them. If we speak to the poor in what is virtually (to use an old phrase) a tongue not understanded of the people, either for lack of plainness, or of earnestness, or of acquaintance with their modes of thought, we are doing other wrongs, but this, not least, that we are weakening the evidences of Christ's Gospel, of which this is one, and characteristic, that the common people do hear it.

II. And suffering, too, knows who this is. The blind and the lame, whatever their creed, mutually recognised Him. They came and were healed. Suffering, like poverty, one form of it is real, is practical, is natural, has no disguises, shows itself as it is, and goes to

the point of help. It is a mistake to say that suffering, whether pain, or sickness, or misery, makes a man fanciful, imaginative, enthusiastic. A Gospel, a Saviour, welcome on a sickbed, gives clearer proof than can elsewhere be found what and who He is.

III. And childhood has its answer concerning Christ. Christ loves children; told us that we must all beome children if we would see God; told us that truths which God hides from the wise and prudent He reveals to babes. He must, indeed, be very ignorant, or very wicked, who can laugh at the testimony of childhood to Jesus Christ. Poverty loves Christ, suffering loves Christ, children love Christ.

IV. The fourth witness is discipleship. Those who had companied with Jesus during those three years past, hearing His words, seeing His works, feeling His love, growing into His wisdom, gradually accustoming themselves to view men and things as He viewed them, and to admire till they adored the patience and self-denial, and the wonderful self-devotion of His character—they, above all others, were ready with the answer to the inquiry, Who is this? You cannot really know what Christ is without first living with Him.

C. J. VAUGHAN,
Words of Hope, p. 29.

The Lord's Need.

Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto Me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. S. MATTHEW xxi. 2, 3.

YOU will remember that the Scripture saith, 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand.' By this principle Christ's life is explicable. In monetary difficulties, He draws a coin from the sea. Finds fig-tree playing hypocritical fantastic tricks; He curses it. The house of God a nest of thieves; He takes knotted cords and drives them out. So here, He sends to claim an ass and a colt as though they were His by right.

This trifling incident contains great principles.

I. Gives us an idea of Providence.

Tendency of the age is to the *seen*. But mind kicks against it. Mind is like a bird, which pines in a cage. Here is hope for religion—the mind kicks against artificial conditionings. If you like, you may say the mind likes, like a bird, to make its nest. True! but it wants above it not a ceiling but a sky. You can't cramp mind in your nutshell organisations. Shut it behind walls—and then it will ask, Who is on the other side of the wall?

Providence involves two things. First—idea of God *preserving*,

guarding our being and wellbeing. He preserves, though we don't see the way. How did Christ know that the ass and colt were to be found at this stated moment? How did He know the owner would part with his property? Similarly we must allow for the knowledge of God.

The second thing involved in Providence is the idea of *Government.* God governs—the supernatural enters into the natural. Revelation not all clear—who wants it clear? We want the valleys and the hills, the mountains which hide their heads in the sky—not one dead level. The divine and human are mingled together, and human wisdom is not competent to sort them.

II. In Providence attention is given to little things as well as great. 'An ass tied.'

It is demeaning God's economy—some will say. That all depends on your conception of God's economy. He numbers the hairs of our head. He sees when the sparrow falls.

III. God holds every creature responsible to show itself when wanted.

Everything, in God's order, has its time, and is not itself till that time reveals it. Sea-wrack on the sea-beach is ugly, slimy, hideous. But the same sea-wrack in a pool! How it spreads itself and makes every tiny filament beautiful! So prophecy in human history needs to be corroborated by the event, before it can fairly be understood. Apparently little events—what worlds of good or evil may turn on them! Joseph being consigned to death by his brethren. But just then the Midianites come along. A very little thing—*only chance*, you may say—but let it be so. Joseph is sold to the Midianites, carried down to Egypt, he sustains his people there when governor, the nation delivered again by Moses, establishment of David on the throne, birth of the Messiah at Bethlehem, salvation of the world—all turns on the selling of Joseph to the Midianites—*which comes of chance!* A child may throw a pebble in the sea, but who shall tell where the waves of influence thus brought into being will stop?

IV. Solution of the mysteries of life.

They go to the man for the colt. Would not common sense ask, What have you to do with the colt? Simply, 'The Master hath need of him.' You have a favourite daughter. One day she is not well—only a cold, you think. But she grows feverish, and you call in the doctor. Doctor prescribes, but still the sweet one sickens; and one day in his solemn look the mother reads the hard sentence—her child must die. Why is it? 'The Lord hath need of it.'

J. B. MEHARRY,

From the *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. iii.

indifference, but that they are compelled to make inquiry about Him. In other words, the question of our text is sure to be asked, wherever the Gospel is preached, although the spirit in which it is asked may be different in different cases.

I. The spirit differs. In the mouths of some people the question is one of a simple curiosity. It can hardly be disputed that the most remarkable figure in human history is that of Jesus of Nazareth. Some persons, when they ask the question of our text, 'Who is this?' are prompted, simply and solely, by a spirit of curiosity.

II. But there are others who ask the question under the influence of another motive—the motive of dislike. 'Who is this that assumes so much? that claims the disposal of our persons, ay, and the control of our very thoughts? Who gave Him this authority? and by what right does He presume thus to lord it over us?'

And such was the feeling of not a few of those who witnessed the entry of the Saviour into Jerusalem. The ruling ecclesiastical party of the day, if at first they thought Jesus a harmless enthusiast, soon began to entertain very serious misgivings about Him. What this led to we very well know. It led to the Cross of Calvary; and the first deep mutterings of the coming storm were heard in the streets of the Holy City, when the scribes and Pharisees—as Jesus passed along calmly on the ass's colt—asked, 'Who is this that permits Himself to be saluted as the King that cometh in the name of the Lord?'

Men sometimes entertain a sort of resentment against the Saviour on account of the exacting nature of the demands which He makes. It is this resentment which keeps them hovering on the outside fringe of the Christian Church, not daring altogether to break with Christ, to renounce His allegiance, and to cast off His yoke, and yet, on the other hand, not willing to render that entire and unreserving submission with which alone He will be satisfied. Or, to phrase it in other words, there are cases in which the question—'Who is this?'—is a question implying recoil from the Saviour's demands, and in virtual, if not an avowed, resistance to the authority which He claims to exercise over the children of men.

III. In the third place, the question of our text is one which is frequently prompted by an earnest desire to know more about the Lord Jesus Christ. It was so, I doubt not, in the crowd that stood round the procession as it wound its way through the streets of Jerusalem. In their case, the question, 'Who is this?' would not be one of a lazy and indifferent curiosity, much less one of an incipient suspicion and dislike; but it would be the outcome of a true wish to be more deeply taught of God, and to understand more clearly the things which concerned their everlasting peace. There are every-

where not a few who may be said to be asking the question of our text, because they are desiring and seeking a deeper acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our knowledge requires to be filled out, as it were, and made a living thing; a thing that shall enter into and influence, and mould, and colour, and tinge every action and thought of our every-day life. Too often it lies quiet in our minds, effecting nothing. What is to be desired is that it should be touched by the Spirit of God, and rise up, and stand upon its feet; and act so that the Lord Jesus Christ should become more and more a living Person and a real Presence to us; so that our communion with Him, and our realisation of Him, shall be in the future true and real, to a degree which we feel it has not been in the past.

G. CALTHROP,
In Christ, p. 271.

The Entry into Jerusalem.

And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
S. MATTHEW xxi. 10.

IT seems very natural to us to ask why the account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday should be read as the Gospel for Advent Sunday. At first sight it looks very like a displacement of the Gospel history, for on Advent Sunday we are thinking of the two extreme points, if we may so term them, of the relationship which the Lord Jesus bears to us, the one of His coming to take our nature upon Him eighteen centuries and a half ago, and the other when He shall come to judge us hereafter; when we suddenly find ourselves in the very midst of His earthly life, at nothing less than its crisis, when He has just wrought His greatest recorded miracle, and is consciously on His way to die. What, then, we feel inclined to ask, is the connection between this entry into Jerusalem and Christ's advent, whether on the occasion of His taking our nature upon Himself, or His still future advent, in the clouds of heaven as Judge of the quick and the dead? Might it not have been better, we may ask, as is the case in some of the Churches of Christendom, to have chosen the Gospel for to-day from some passage in which our Lord describes His second coming, such, for instance, as the Gospel for Sunday next? This, brethren, is what some of *us* may think, but these old liturgical arrangements were made by people who knew very well what they were about. They have been continued to our day because they have been found, by the experience of some thirteen or fourteen centuries, to have a deep lesson for the human soul. They are not often interfered with now without loss, and it may be

questioned whether we have in this generation the men to touch up the works of the great masters of the Christian life; whether we can make the attempt even on the small scale of our new Lectionaries and revised Prayer-Book, without stumbling into some crude mistakes, which another age will criticise, more or less sharply and justly, by the light of a deeper mastery of spiritual truth.

This Gospel is chosen because it brings before us *two* great truths; not only that of the first coming of our Divine Saviour into the world, but of His coming to the judgment. Passages of Scripture describing either of these momentous events would be obviously appropriate, but to do justice to the solemn time upon which we enter to-day, we require to keep these two truths clearly before the eye of the soul.

That which moves the whole community to its very depths is that which touches man as *man*. Not man as the capitalist; not man as the citizen or the subject; not man as belonging to this profession or to that; not as one of this class or that; but Man as a being who has a conscience, and a consciousness of his mighty destiny; who knows that he is here but for a few years at most, and that during those few years he is here upon his trial; who feels the solemnity of his position press on his very soul; who has a perpetual presentiment of coming death and of the world which lies beyond it. When Jesus entered Jerusalem 'all the city was moved,' because Jesus, by His very presence and bearing, spoke to the souls of all; the power of His presence was felt in different ways, but it was felt universally.

I. We may take it for granted, first of all, that the main element in the general excitement would be curiosity. Crowds of pilgrims were arriving by their caravans day by day to the great Festival, bringing with them, from Galilee, reports of the miracles which Jesus had performed in the north of Palestine; of the startling nature of His teaching; of the vast influence which He had exerted amongst the straightforward people of the northern provinces. 'Jesus Christ, the prophet of Galilee,' was already a name known more or less to every inhabitant of Syria who took any interest whatever in the questions of the day; and there were, as was to be expected, wild stories handed about, such as gather round every distinguished name; stories which are produced by and which stimulate the general excitement. Nor was Jesus unknown in Jerusalem itself. Only in the preceding September, at the Feast of Tabernacles, He had worked a miracle upon the man who was born blind, which had been the subject of special and searching investigation before the committee of the Great Council, the Sanhedrim. That inquiry had notoriously failed to shake the evidence of the person who had been its subject. After

a short journey into Galilee, Christ had again appeared in Jerusalem, at the end of December, during the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, when an attempt had been made upon His life in consequence of His clear assertion of a claim to be Divine; and since that date an event had occurred which had roused the feelings of the capital to the highest pitch. At the village of Bethany, not quite three quarters of an hour's walk from the city gate, and only just beyond the brow of the hill known as the Mount of Olives, He had raised from the dead, nay, from the very putrefaction of the tomb, the body of Lazarus, a member of a well-known family in Bethany.

Much of the interest which is felt on the subject of Religion in all ages belongs, in one way or other, to the interest of *curiosity*. The world stands outside the sacred Temple, but it strains its eyesight very hard indeed in order to see as much of the interior as it possibly can, through the windows or the half-opened doors. If, indeed, Religion is dormant, if the Church is weighed down by a spirit of deadly lethargy, public curiosity takes little heed of it, except in the way of an occasional expression of languid and half-kindly contempt. But when life and activity return there is a change. In George the Third's time the public prints of this country scarcely alluded to religion in any way, except as a sort of decoration of the body politic which came out into view on state occasions. We have but to read the newspapers of our own day, whatever be their politics or their principles, to appreciate the vastness of the change. Jesus has come into the city indeed, in the two great religious movements which have taken place in this century: and, for good or for evil, from one motive or another, but very largely indeed from a curious wish to know what it is all about—'all the city is moved.'

II. Now the second element in the excitement referred to at Jerusalem was assuredly, fear.

The ruling sect of the Pharisees, which largely, although by no means entirely, influenced the conduct and opinions of the priesthood, was alarmed at the moral influence of Jesus. The Pharisees felt that between them and Jesus there could be nothing less than a fundamental opposition. They instinctively felt that in the long-run He must be stronger than they, therefore they were prepared to persecute Him to the death. Fear is a form of envy. Fear tends to be very practical indeed. Irrational fear soon becomes cruel if only it has arms in its hands. Persecution is more frequently the resource of the timid than the counsel of the wise and the strong. To persecute is to make a public confession of weakness. Is not much of the interest that is taken in religion at the present day dictated in some respects by fear? Men who are not religious themselves, but who have seen the vast power of religion upon the minds of those around

them, fear religion, just as savages are said to suspect witchcraft in any new apparatus or scientific discovery.

III. The third element in the general excitement alluded to in the text is the imitative habit which influences so many, in all ages and countries. There are always many people who are most anxious to keep pace with the modern enthusiasm, not because it is the best, but because it is the most modern. They keep a stock of sympathy always on hand, ready to be lavished upon any promising eccentricity that may present itself, or that may be sufficiently recognised by persons to whose opinions they attribute weight. They seem always sensitively afraid of being behind the age, behind its very latest phase of fashionable opinion. They do not originate these novelties themselves, but they are always at the disposal of those who do. There is no doubt, however, that imitative religion is capable of doing a great deal of work. It is far better than no interest in religion at all. It may always by God's grace lead on to something much deeper and more solid than itself. But do not let us mistake it. That sort of interest is only skin-deep ; it has no sort of root in the soul. It belongs altogether to the ephemeral creations of the social atmosphere. It will not stand a strain or a shock ; it dies when the occasion or the influence which provoked it is gone.

Moral and spiritual strength has no more necessary relation to numbers than our mental and intellectual power has to the size of our bodies. It belongs to a different order of being—in fact, it often seems that mental energy is in an inverse ratio to physical power. This little company then, was the very heart and centre of all the multitude which gathered there on that day ; the one permanent element in it. The curious would soon sate their curiosity when Jesus had declared Himself frankly in the Temple. The hostile would postpone their vengeance in presence of the conviction that, to attempt its gratification, would ensure immediate defeat. The imitative would cease to imitate when imitation became dangerous. And, indeed, during the dark hours of His Passion, a cloud would, no doubt, pass over the faith of the small and devoted band who had united themselves to Jesus. But this would be but temporary. On the morning of the Resurrection their faith would shine forth more brightly than before. They were the real moving power of that day ; *there* stood, in fact, the secret germ of the future Church. So it was then, and so it has been since.

H. P. LIDDON,
Church Sermons, vol. i. p. 33.

ADVENT SUNDAY

The Social Influence of Christ.

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, Jesus sendeth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village that is over against you: and straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any one say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, The Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him back hither. And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door without in the open street; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had said: and they let them go. S. Mark xi. 1-6 (Parallel Passage to the Gospel).

THIS incident of Gospel story is emblematic of the whole social influence of Christ as the great Emancipator of the world.

'Why loose ye the colt?' 'The Lord hath need of him.'

Here is a question and an answer. A question, expressing an outraged sense of private property. An answer, revealing the true ground upon which all property rests, the ultimate social good, the common wellbeing or wealth of the community.

I. I suppose there never was a time in the social history of our country when the rights of property were regarded with more reverence than they are to-day in England. 'The sacredness of property' is indeed the commonest of phrases. One of the main foundation-stones of the building of the State, we shall be told, is the institution of private property, and one of the chief ends of all government is its protection. And this opinion has of course the sanction of history. For although in the earliest stage on which the light of history falls, if we are to trust the best authorities, there was no such thing as private property, but only collective ownership, yet of this there can be no doubt, that under all civilisations, after a certain stage of social development, all human societies seem to come inevitably to the institution of private property, nearly always to private property in land, invariably to private property in moveable things. So it has been with all the great families of mankind—the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, the Hindoos, the Chinese, the Germans, the Celts, the Slavs.

It was a saying of that scornful prophet, Thomas Carlyle, that 'the Englishman's hell is want of money—failure to acquire property.' He seemed to think that this hell was a very paltry and trifling one. I cannot think he was right. The hell in question—if only the poverty or the lack of money is sufficiently absolute—seems to me a very serious and a very real one. It is an Inferno, too, in which there are many circles, whose inmates vary from the failures and bankrupts of fortune, enduring the scorching fires of shame and degradation, to the luckless lack-alls, exposed to the squalid sorrows and miseries of

a servitude to which, only because they have become inured to it, they seem to have become insensible.

When we remember what a host of fears and terrors drop off and fade away for the happy man who steps into the possession of even a 'modest competence;' what a dismal host of threatening phantoms, potent to sap strength from life, and to spoil all our little happiness, dissolves away for the man who has what with deep insight we call 'an independence;' what freedom from anxiety there is in the breast of the man who has 'private means,' a store of treasure laid up and guarded by law in a well-ordered and stable State; when we remember these things, I say, is it wonderful that to most of us accumulated property should seem the first and almost the sole thing worthy of a sane man's pursuit in this world? And yet, if this theory be true—if money, heaped-up property, be the one thing, the chief thing to struggle for—what are we to make of the teaching of Christ? 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon. . . . A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. . . . It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. . . . Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.'

How shall we escape from the contradiction?

II. There is, I think, but one solution of the problem. We shall have to change our conception of Life; we shall have to change our conception of Property.

We need to get a totally new conception of the meaning of Life, first as to its motive, then as to its objects. In other words, we need to realise the absolute truth of those two sayings of Christ: (i.) 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,' and (ii.) 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'

(1) First, as to the motive of life, its moving spring. *That*, Christ says, must be religion. 'Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God.' Apply this to the subject before us, and we reach, I think, this position: that no re-arrangement of society, no social transformation is possible, has ever been possible, or ever will be, except as the application of a religious principle—of a moral development—of a strong and active common faith. To change institutions for the better, we need to change men for the better. And to do this we need and shall ever need religious motive. We might be all safely Socialists to-morrow, if we were only really Christians to-day.

(2) Again, we need also a new conception of the objects of life and its possibilities. 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' Does not Christ in these words remind us that we all need *a moral revaluation of the things of life*, a new appraisement of the things which are best worth pursuing?

(3) Lastly, we need a new conception of property, its rights and duties.

I must be satisfied with merely stating baldly these five propositions, which I think may be logically deduced from Christ's doctrine of property, which briefly I take to be this—that of worldly possessions, as of all worldly gifts, the Christian is the steward of God, holding his wealth in trust for the common wellbeing.

My propositions are these:

(*a*) That the true social order, according to the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven, as revealed in the teaching of Christ, should have for its basis, not the accumulation of wealth through self-interest and competition, but human progress and wellbeing, through self-sacrifice and association.

(*b*) That society exists not for the sake of private property, but private property for the sake of society.

(*c*) That the right use of property must be insisted upon as a religious duty; that as capital arises from common labour, so in justice it should be made to minister to common wants.

(*d*) That wealth does not release the rich man from his obligation to work, but only enables him to do unpaid work for society.

(*e*) Finally, it is not the equalisation of property that is needed, but its moralisation.

C. W. STUBBS,
Christ and Economics, p. 105.

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

Mercy for all.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. ISAIAH i. 18.

HOW sublimely humble is the image presented to us in the text! God sits upon His sovereignty, and every creature that He has made has warned Him out into a distance from him. We have spurned His love—we have broken every law—and there we lie, deeply, in our degradation. And He sits high upon His throne. Angels wait to hear the language of penitence springing spontaneously from the sinner's spirit. All is silent here—all is silent! When, like a tender father over some wayward child, God cares for those who have no care for themselves. He has watched over us, till He can bear it no longer. He stoops down from His throne—lays aside the majesty of His glory—and His language becomes the language of the

suitor, and He says, 'Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

And this is the language in which now, from Advent to Advent, for months and years, God has been addressing every one of us. Oh! who can measure the long-drawn patience of our Father's love? How often He has said, 'Come now;' and how as often we have said, 'To-morrow, to-morrow.' He has met you sometimes in the secrecy of your own bosom, and He has whispered to you in the quiet evening hour, 'Come.' He has laid you on a bed of sickness, and made all still about you, and drawn around you the curtains, that you might hear the whisper, 'Come.' He has brought you very low, and there have been times when life has seemed to be ebbing out, and on the borders of eternity He has said, 'Come.' And this very morning, with a love as free as if He had never spoken, as if He had never been rejected before, He says to every soul in this congregation, 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.'

I. 'Come,'—God begins. 'Come.' This is the word He loves. He very seldom says to His people, 'Go.' And this is the reason,—because He never sends them where He has not first gone Himself. Peradventure you may have to pass through deep trials and afflictions —but God is there. Therefore He says, 'Come.' 'Come' is His first word to a penitent: 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Come' will be the invitation of heaven's King—'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Therefore it is, 'Come now.' 'Come,' God says. 'Come now, and let us reason together.'

'But wherewithal shall I come?' the conscience-stricken sinner says; 'I have nothing, and therefore I cannot come. I have nothing to bring to Thee but a poor, wicked heart.'

'That wicked heart,' God answers, 'is all I want. It is My own property. The purchase price of all you want—pardon and peace—was paid long ago by the blood of Christ, when He died for you. Therefore, "come" with that wicked heart—"come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price."'

'But if I come,' the penitent replies, 'I shall very soon fall away. It will be of no use. I am so weak. My enemies are so strong. There is the world, and the buffeting of the devil in me; and it were better never to come, than to come and fall away again.'

'Fear not,' God says, 'I have redeemed you. My strength is made perfect in thy weakness. I will never leave thee, never forsake thee. I will keep thee as the apple of mine eye. I will write upon thee My new name. I will undertake for thee.'

II. Hear what God says, '*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*'

All our sins are of a 'crimson' dye; for, remember, it is not needful for us to have steeped our hands in a brother's blood to make our guilt 'scarlet.' God measures sins by privileges. One evil thought in one man, is as much as a thousand crimes in another man.

You must be very careful to understand that it is not sin which keeps a man out of heaven—but it is that, being a sinner, he rejects salvation. All other crimes have their palliation—but he who refuses Christ finally closes the door against salvation. He is like a dying man who puts away the last medicine.

There is a beautiful simplicity in God's way of dealing with us. He says, 'Wash, and be clean.' You wish to do something for yourselves—but the simple direction of the gospel is, 'Go, take one dip in Calvary's stream, and all—it matters not whether it be little or great—all from that instant is cancelled for ever.' There is not a spot left; and never through eternity will sins once purged rise up again to condemn you. Forgiven once, forgiven for ever!

I know it is a matter of doubt, whether the sins forgiven in this world will be mentioned against us in the day of judgment. I believe not. But—if to vindicate God's justice, the sins which we have done on earth shall be mentioned before that great tribunal, believers! there shall be no shadow of shame for you—there shall be upon your souls such a perfect consciousness of your own happiness, that not only can you bear, but you can delight to hear of sins, which now only testify of the forgiving grace of God. You can rejoice to have self before the whole world cast into the dust, that the Redeemer may sit high upon His glory; and through eternity those dark sins which cloud you now will only make for you, and the whole assembly in heaven, more and more hallelujahs—hallelujahs which you will continually chant before the throne of God.

And if you have a hope that you have, once, known what it is to feel the sense of forgiveness—believe me, there is nothing in creation so white as a forgiven spirit—whiter than that snow: not Aaron's robe is so bright—not the heavens are so clean, as a blood-washed spirit. There is not the vestige of a speck on it. God never pardons half. There is not a being upon earth who has had one sin forgiven, another unforgiven. If one sin that you have ever committed is forgiven, every sin that you have committed from your birth is forgiven. Present sins may trouble you—they may send you to the fountain day by day—and for each day's defiling you may require each day sprinkling. But 'he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' The sins of

former years are all gone. By the act of faith which first knit you to Christ, they are all passed away. And why? Because at that moment God saw you in Christ. It is no longer you, the man, the rebel, that God sees, but it is Christ, the holy, the perfect—that God sees. You are lost in Him. Once lost out of Him in hell,—now lost in Him in heaven,—and, being lost in Christ, you will stand before the judgment-seat—being lost in Him you will live through eternal day—spotless, perfectly spotless—not you, but Christ: Christ in you, and you in Christ, for ever and ever. J. VAUGHAN,

Fifty Sermons, 1874, p. 33.

Responsibility in regard to Missions.

And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. ISAIAH ii. 17.

THE prophet Isaiah is speaking first of all and most clearly in the language of exalted feeling. He is raised, in the words of the text, to a higher platform than the platform of common life; he is feeling strongly the things of another world. But more than in the language of exalted feeling he is speaking also in the language of powerful prophecy; that is to say, he is not only dealing with events which are future—and certainly he is doing that—but also he is grasping with a full possession the great power and intensity of truth. That is the meaning of prophecy in its largest sense.

I. The prophet Isaiah is speaking about a prosperous people. What is more, he is speaking to a people who are carried away through their prosperity in a kind of delirium, with a kind of whirlwind of success. The eye of the people of Judah is intensely fixed—and who can blame them—upon what belongs to time. Commercial prosperity, military organisation, great power in the executive departments of the government of the period; nay—for indeed the words of the prophet justify the assertion—even some power in exaltation in the higher departments of art, all these things had, if I may venture to use the expression, turned the heads of the people of Judah; they were positively in the delirium of success. And when any people have their eye fixed upon that; have their eye fixed upon a vision which itself is rather toned by what belongs to the success of this life, you and I, being human, dare not blame them, if, say, three-fourths of their perspective was entirely material.

Now, that was the case with the people of Judah. And then there rises a man amongst them with the heart, with the vigour, with the nerve of a man, but with this peculiarity, that in the midst of the delirium of success, in the midst of the wild fever-dream into which they had been led by the splendour of the extension of their empire,

his eye is fixed, not upon the material, but fixed persistently and energetically and even passionately upon the triumph of the kingdom of God.

Let us remember that any missionary society is, in fact, the executive of a great responsibility. Let us remember that any missionary society, when she undertakes a work, undertakes a work that really lies behind her and of which she is only the active agent; but the sources are to be found in the Church of God. Nay, may I not say it for a moment, that those sources are to be found in a Christian soul.

Whatever be the exact measure of that responsibility, this, at least, is certain—that any society, be it natural, be it supernatural, be it some society that touches lofty thoughts of the intellect or highest thoughts of the spirit, consists of individual souls, and that the soul, when it realises its strength and its weakness; when it knows its present power, its future calls to claims made upon it, its wild desires, its better hopes, its lofty future, its failure in attainment—that soul becomes itself a source of life, a spring of strength looking straight into the future, exclaiming, as the prophet exclaims, in the words of the text: 'The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.'

II. Our responsibility is national. The day is coming when God shall ask what this great aggregate of human beings, who enjoy the possession of an ordered power, who by that ordered power have extended what we call our colonies—what it is that this aggregate of human beings have done to work out that which stirred the heart of the prophet—the triumph of the kingdom of God. Ordered power is the possession of a nation, especially of England.

There was a time when Roman discovery and Roman science mapped out a universe such as never was known; when the *estaffetes*, as the French would call them, were posted along those Roman roads that led the way from the capital to the furthest confines of that wonderful empire; there was a time when organisation, minute, extraordinary, marked the power of Imperial Rome, and what did God do at that moment? At that moment Christ came; and, by the power of that organisation, there was spread throughout the then known universe the kingdom of Christ.

There came a time when there was another empire with larger discoveries, with greater opportunities, with sweeter thoughts, with holier powers, because so many in that empire were literally baptized children of the kingdom of God. You and I are in that empire. The name of the nation to which we belong hath been respected throughout every quarter of the globe, and our flag has floated upon many seas. What is the use of that great force of military achieve-

ment? What is the eternal use of that great power of naval success? The only use is this, that 'the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.' The only use of England's greatness will be how far that greatness, how far that national prosperity, has contributed to the great vision that was before the prophet—contributed to the triumph of the kingdom of God.

III. The responsibility is supernatural. It does not affect merely to support the ancient throne round which we stand with the love of men that have a great tradition of the past. No; it affects to touch those facts, those thoughts, and those certainties, those desires that grasp eternity; and as you and I believe that eternity is but the fulfilment and the extension of character that has been trained in time; so we can only give our help to any department of our Church, which, being national, or recognising ties of blood, forgets not that better country in which dwell, so we trust, the lost ones whom we love.

W. J. KNOX LITTLE,

Christian World Pulpit, June 28, 1882.

War.

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ISAIAH ii. 4.

PLATO, in the second book of the *Republic*, in the picture in which he swiftly dramatises the upspringing of human society out of the immediate and natural needs that link men to one another in a confederacy of mutual help, traces in a few vivid touches the probable origin of war. His rudimentary State has quickly overstepped the strict limits set it by natural wants. It has brought reason and imagination into play, to enlarge its possibilities, to increase and multiply its desires. Luxury has begun—luxury, which takes its start in the simplest devices for giving a spice to food, and culminates in the higher forms of spice which are added to life by the efforts of rhapsodists, and dancers, and players, and poets. The desires which of old limited themselves to the resources which the home country supplied now travel far afield. The house is too small; we want a slice of our neighbours' land; and they, too, if they exceed the limit of necessity, will want a slice of ours. 'That will be unavoidable, Socrates,' so his companion Glaucon agrees. 'And then we shall go to war, Glaucon; that will be the next thing.' 'So we shall,' he replied. 'War, then,' says Socrates, 'we have certainly discovered to be derived from a source which is the cause of almost all the evils in States, private as well as public.'

So Plato affirms; but then comes a startling surprise. Though the origin of war lies, according to him, in the greed bred by luxury, yet the army which war necessitates becomes for him the very centre and heart of his State; to its training he devotes all his powers; and out of it he proposes to educate and select the highest ideal of human character, the statesman-philosopher, who is at once the master and king of society, and also, in his culminating perfection, the priest of truth, the friend of God.

How is this? It is because Plato is fully possessed by the belief that evil can only be cured from within itself. Evil is a corruption of good, and its healing must lie always in laying fast hold of the good to which the evil corruptly witnesses, and in so enforcing and strengthening this latent good that it shall itself, of its own free and native vigour, eliminate and eradicate its sinister elements, and, by discovering its true exercise, purge off its own excesses. In war, therefore, he looks to find the secret of war's cure.

I. This old discussion is thrown into a form in the *Republic* which is, in some ways, curiously Greek, antique, remote. And yet there is much here which tells home upon us to-day, if we transpose it a little into its modern key. In the first place, Plato has brought out into emphatic prominence the vivid paradox with which we still find ourselves confronted as often as we face the problem of war. On the one side, as he said, so still, war belongs to everything that is worst in our nature. A war represents an utter breakdown of everything that can be properly called human. It is the declaration that all the bonds that knit society together are useless, are shattered; that all the efforts of civilisation to build the city of man in equity and brotherhood and trust and goodness have been scattered into fragments, have gone to the winds. Society falls to pieces before our eyes. It abandons its work; it gives up the game.

Yet, even in its rougher forms, we cannot but recognise the value of the character built up under the training of the barracks. We see the rawest material, which defies all other methods of education, taken up by this disciplinary system and endowed with the instincts of confederated honour, and with the brotherly heart that comes from responsibilities shared in common. This in the very roughest. And, in its finer examples, it touches the very heights of the spiritual life; it becomes typical of all that is most serene, and high-strung, and controlled, and tender; it can pass up to the very glories of Christian saintliness.

II. There is the paradox; and, in face of it, we must not shrink from the method of deliverance in which the bold insight of Plato anticipated, as in a dream, the reality of the Christian mode of redemption. We can only throw off the horror and wickedness of

war by releasing, from out of this embroilment of blood, the moral qualities, the spiritual character, which have hitherto found their meaning and discipline under the conditions of war. Those qualities are too precious and rare for society to afford to lose them. They have on them the stamp of nobility—the ideal beauty that belongs to the high excellencies of obedience, of restraint, of self-sacrifice.

Here, then, is our task, we who work for peace. We see how deep and serious it is. We have to plunge below the horrible surface of war; to seize and grasp tight these its spiritual powers; to detach them from their base entanglement; to disengage them and liberate them; to draw them up into a sweeter air, on to a clearer ground; so that they may find, in the life where the battle-flag is furled, a worthy field of exercise, an opportunity of noble growth. We have got to make human society aware that it can secure and retain and develop, under conditions of unbroken peace, all those precious qualities which now go to make the highest type of soldierly excellence. We shall never fully succeed in that object until we make it evident to the spiritual element in us that it does not need war in order to survive; that it can, without the ugly necessity of killing and being killed, still find vent for all that is in it of chivalry and of valour, for the heroism of self-devotion and for the splendour of courage. We must educate these very qualities themselves to shrink in disgust from the barbarism of battle, to hunger for an exercise that will be free from cruelty and hate. If the soldier-spirit itself once learned the sensitiveness which would feel the moral hideousness of the scene in which it now has to display its gift, then we might hope to see the beginning of the end. Then, and then only, could we genuinely look for the day when the very implements with which we fight should be turned to happier uses; when the very temper out of which wars are bred should devote itself to the labours of peace; when the very 'swords should be turned into ploughshares, and the spears into pruning-hooks.'

H. SCOTT HOLLAND,
Pleas and Claims for Christ, p. 276.

The Light of the Lord.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. ISAIAH ii. 5.

'THE light of the Lord.' What did that light mean for the Judah of Isaiah's day?

I. It meant, first of all, a true estimate of what the descendants of Jacob, the chosen people, were meant to be in the mind and predestination of God. This high and glorious ideal had been revealed to them, but had been lost sight of; and Isaiah quotes words which had already been used by Micah—which were already familiar to

religious Jews as having a divine authority, as probably coming down to both prophets from an earlier age. They describe a world-embracing empire, but a spiritual one: they describe an exaltation of Jerusalem, but not as a great military power: they speak of it as a home of the nations, to teach the nations not the duties of political submission, but the charm and the claims of truth. When Uzziah was conquering Arabs and Philistines, when he was constructing fortifications and harbours, when he was making provisions for agriculture and for commerce, he was doubtless doing his duty; he was doubtless doing the best he could for his people, in a certain sense, but then it was a sense common to himself and every heathen monarch in Asia. The Assyrians, too, were already warriors, greater warriors than he: they were architects, greater architects than he: they were greater than he in commercial and constructive enterprise. But Israel, if she only knew it, had, according to the mind and will of God, a higher, a more splendid destiny before her. She was to have a place in some future as yet undefined—a place in the spiritual empire of the world—a place unshared, unique, unapproachable. This place, this destiny, she was to keep steadily in view. For this she was to prepare herself as the ages passed. With this no lowering, no earthly ambition, no material splendour or success, ought to have interfered. To have forgotten this destiny, to have exchanged it for the paltry glitter of heathen grandeur, was in Isaiah's judgment to walk in the darkness—the darkness of an ignorance which simulated knowledge—the darkness of a light which only flickered sufficiently to mislead. 'Come,' he cries, in indignation and in agony, to his wandering countrymen,—'come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.'

II. 'The light of the Lord.' It meant, secondly, a true appreciation by the Jewish people of their own moral and spiritual condition. The human light in which the nation was actually walking revealed to it only the splendour of its outward circumstances, the evidences of its wealth, of its power, of its material progress, which everywhere met the eye. It did not pierce down to discover the dark moral realities beneath; it did not even suggest a suspicion of their existence. The conquered heathen had more than avenged themselves by sapping the true strength of the conquering race, by teaching Israel the vices which had ruined themselves; and thus the prosperity which, in the public opinion of the time, looked like the highest success, was, in the prophet's eyes, a presentiment, nay, a warrant, of the gravest failure. It might seem to be the fulfilment of prophecy in a human light: in reality, placed beneath the light of the Lord, it was a caricature of the one true fulfilment. When the law and the memories of Sinai were being decently buried beneath the tinsel of a civilisation which was at once idolatrous and corrupt,

this outward glory of which men thought and said so much, was, in Isaiah's eyes, but as some royal robe thrown carelessly over a ghastly skeleton, in hideous contrast, by its very beauty, to the form of death which lurked beneath. 'Come,' he cried to his countrymen—'come, let there be a truce to our long self-deception. Let us look not merely at the surface of our national life, but to that which underlies it. Let us look at things not merely as we wish to see them; let us look at them as they *are*. Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.'

III. 'The light of the Lord.' It meant, thirdly, an assurance of coming judgment. This third ray of the divine light falling on the national conscience, this last, and in some respects this gravest of its discoveries, was practically inseparable from the preceding. When man knows what God means him to be, what God enables him to be—when man knows what, as a matter of fact, in his deep self he is—he then knows also (he cannot but know) what must follow. God would not be Himself—Himself in His sanctity, Himself in His justice—if nothing were to follow,—if it were possible that knowledge and grace could thus be succeeded in His creatures by sin with entire impunity. With Judah's ideal of its capacity for true greatness,—with Judah's deep degradations scarcely shrouded by what met the eye,—it could not be that no change, no penal visitation, no catastrophe, was impending. No; when the light of the Lord fell upon the conscience men saw and knew that it could not last—this pageant of worldly splendour. They felt that this glittering society which discounted so largely and so lightly on the future was visibly, rapidly, ripening for approaching judgment; and Isaiah draws attention to the clear, piercing, awful light—this light of the Lord—radiating down from His essential justice. As men of all classes in Jewish society fell down before the idols which were imported from abroad, so all would share the coming ruin of the nation. 'The mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself; and forgive them, no, Thou wilt not.' The nation so prosperous, so self-confident, would hide itself for very fear and shame when the only true glory, the glory of the Lord, was manifested in judgment. Men would take refuge in the holes of the rocks, as if to escape from a hostile army. They would bury themselves with their faces in the sand, as if before the fatal simoom of the desert, that they might escape, if it could be, from the intolerable sight. 'Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.'

H. P. LIDDON,

Penny Pulpit, New Series, No. 612.

ADVENT SUNDAY

An Appeal to the House of Jacob.

O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord. ISAIAH ii. 5.

WE gather from the text that a vision of exceeding magnificence and beauty had appeared to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. Looking down the long vista of the ages, he sees his own beloved city rising up in the distance in glowing glory, the most conspicuous object on the face of the whole earth. To this mountain of the Lord's house the nations were streaming from every quarter. It was not the lust of conquest, or the desire of gain, or the curiosity of the travellers that inspired them. They were come for spiritual instruction. The attraction which drew their steps was the attraction of truth, for out of Zion was going forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The prophet looks again, and he beholds a singular transformation passing over the world at large. The spiritual teaching is producing its effect. Men are bowing themselves before the proclamation of the Divine will; and all violence and oppressive practices are laid aside. No longer is war studied as an art; no longer does the conqueror shake the earth with the tramp of his armies; the sword is beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook, and the reign of universal human brotherhood has begun. For a moment the spectacle, so unlike what Isaiah has been accustomed to witness, holds him spell-bound with its enchanting beauty, and then he bursts out into the eager appeal of the text, 'O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord,' obviously because he feels deeply the realisation of his vision depends upon the conduct of the people to whom he belongs.

And what happens next? He turns to look at the actual condition of Judah and Jerusalem at the time. Alas! what promises were there of the fulfilment of his expectation? The country is wealthy enough; it is positively full of silver and gold; evidences of an abounding prosperity are seen in chariots and horses, in the palaces of the noble, in the luxury of the wealthy, in the stately merchantmen who spread their white wings to the breeze and bring to the ports of Judæa the costly products of distant lands, and in the rich and lavish decorations which in every direction meet the eye. But the fair scene is disfigured by the idol temple and the idol grove, and the smoke of heathen sacrifice rises over the land which Jehovah claims as exclusively His own.

Glancing then from the vision to the reality, the prophet falls almost into a state of despair; at least he feels, as he never felt so keenly before, that there is no hope in man 'whose breath is in his

nostrils;' that generation after generation must pass away ere these things can be accomplished. His only hope is in the promise-keeping and eternal God. Such then is 'the word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw, concerning Judah and Jerusalem.'

I. Here, then, we have our first inference from the passage now under consideration. Let me state it once more. There is to be a glorious and happy future for this world of ours, a real golden age such as never entered into the heart of poet or artist to conceive. In this golden age the horrors which chill our blood when we hear of them, the fiendish atrocities which stain our humanity so foully that it is impossible not to believe that they are perpetrated by some unseen infernal agent working behind the scenes, all these things shall have passed away and shall seem like the recollection of a nightmare when we wake up, and the wholesomeness of our ordinary existence has returned upon us. In this golden age the craving and the greed, the drive and the push, the bitter struggle for existence which characterise our modern civilisation, the terrible inequalities that exist amongst us, with unbounded wealth and unbounded luxury at one end of the social scale, and with squalid, hopeless destitution at the other, shall have become things of the past. In this golden age love and brotherhood shall be the rule, and selfishness—if it is to be met with at all—shall be the exception. There will be no war, no strife, no discord; all men will be members one of another. And the cause of the change will be found in the universal acceptance of Divine truth; or, in other words, in the fact that God has been recognised in the beneficence of His sway, and in the unspeakable tenderness of His love and mercy to the children of men.

II. And now let us advance to a second inference from the same passage. The prophet, as we have seen, perceives clearly enough that the realisation of his vision depends upon his people. But, when he turns to look upon that people as they are, he perceives quite as clearly that no dependence is to be placed upon them so long as they remain in their present condition. When they walk in the light of the Lord, then these great hopes of his will begin to be fulfilled. But is Israel walking in the light of the Lord? Is Israel conscious of his grand and lofty destiny? Does the light so stream upon him from the mountain-top that he lifts his eyes up to it instead of casting them down on the pursuit of gain, or on the gratification of his own appetite for pleasure? Assuredly it is not possible to answer this question in the affirmative. No; there must be a change in Israel himself before the transformation, the great transformation, will take place in the world at large.

We remember that one of the Hebrew prophets said, 'The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince

and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.' And this seems to us to be an absolutely perfect picture of the present condition of the ancient race. Certainly they are untainted by the abominations of idolatry in any form; image and teraphim they cannot away with. Certainly, too, they have no visible centre of national unity, no kingdom, no prince; temple, priesthood, sacrifices, all are gone. Can you conceive of a truer or more graphic representation of the present state of Israel? And this state, as all of us very well know, has continued many days—ay, many days. But is it lost for ever? The prophet tells us that it shall terminate. When? When the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days. I make the prophet Hosea then my witness.

O house of Jacob, it comes to this: The world is waiting for you, but before you can be the world's true benefactors, you must, you *must* learn how to retrace your steps. G. CALTHROP,

Family Churchman, May 13, 1892.

The Bringing down and the Lifting up of the Day of Judgment.

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. ISAIAH ii. 11.

I. CONSIDER the last day, the day of the Lord, as a time when all that is high and proud in this world will be brought low; all that men naturally exalt and value themselves upon; and the Lord alone shall be exalted. Then will be fulfilled, once and for ever, all the sayings and prophecies of our Lord and His Apostles concerning the exaltation of the lowly and the humiliation of the high and lofty ones. All the show of visible glories will end; when the world and all things that are therein shall be burned up; and so will the kingdoms and empires, the companies and cities of men, to which in Scripture these mountains are compared. Only one mountain, the kingdom of the city, will endure; the Church, the mountain of the Lord's house, the kingdom of heaven, the city of the living God, that will endure when all the rest perish, because it is not of this world.

II. The great pattern and example of God's favour to the poor, towards which all eyes and hearts will be drawn, will be the appearance of the lowly Son of Mary, of Him who had not where to lay His head, the rejected, the mocked, the scourged and crucified One, upon His throne of glory judging the world. There will be a great multitude of poor persons, such as Lazarus in the parable, who lived and

died unknown among men, slighted, perhaps ill-used, by those who were most bound to help them; but because they had faith, and patience, and obedience, Christ will own them in that day as His own members, His own poor. All those in a low condition are to be honoured by us as partakers of the promise of Christ. We must deal with them reverentially and tenderly; we must watch to do them good; for these are they whom He invites to Him, and whom He delights to comfort and to honour.

J. KEBLE,
Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve, p. 279.

The Day of the Lord.

The day of the Lord shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, . . . and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. ISAIAH ii. 11, 12.

THERE is one effect of the tremendous revolution which will accompany the coming of the Son of Man which remains to be considered—the abasement of all that is proud and lofty, and the exaltation of all that is meek and humble. It seems from the text that even natural objects which are exalted will be brought low: the cedars of Lebanon, the majestic and spreading oaks, the high mountains, the hills.

And of course the works of man; the high towers, even those of our cathedrals; the ships, the ironclads, seemingly the most indestructible works of man, and even the loftiest conceptions in human art, the pleasant pictures.

I. Now by this enumeration we are taught that everything earthly, everything that ministers to human pride, will pass away altogether, and the pride itself will be humbled utterly. For how can pride continue to exist in the face of the glory of the Judge and the King, and that King once a meek, lowly, despised, rejected, crucified man? The thing that will humble men to the dust is not only the actual glory of the King, but that glory following upon the exceeding lowliness of His condition here. This is recognised in the collect, 'Now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day when He shall come in His glorious majesty.'

II. And this state of things, this humility, this self-abasement of all the servants of God, will continue for ever. The meek shall begin thus, and for ever continue to inherit the earth. Then it will be seen how he 'that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' And this seems only consonant with the greatest work of God, the Incarnation of His Son, and so we pray to

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God that as He has given us His only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility, so He would grant us that we may follow the example of His patience. This is no small, no insignificant consequence of His Incarnation, but one without which we cannot share His glory. M. F. SADLER,

Sermon Outlines, p. 17.

The Promise to the Prophet.

In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence. ISAIAH iv. 2-5.

THERE can hardly be a greater contrast than is presented between this and the preceding chapter. That is a succession of woes denounced against the unfaithful peoples, falling upon the ear with a rattle of continuous thunder. In this the seer's eye kindles, and he waxes eloquent in the tidings he is commissioned to proclaim; just as in nature, when the tempest has spent its force, the glad sun seems to have a softer radiance, as if he shone on purpose to soothe and strengthen what had been fretted and weakened by the storm. So the promise is held more closely, and is felt to have a warmer and sweeter application by the oppression from which the remnant are represented to have escaped.

I. Look first at the preparation for the promise. In the earlier verses of the chapter you will find that two things are presented as antecedent to the gifts of blessing—that is, the coming of the Divine Saviour, and His discipline for holiness within His Church. The transition from the gloomy judgment to the grandeur of deliverance is abrupt and striking, as if from a savage wilderness one were to emerge suddenly into green pastures and among gay flowers. The Divine wrath is poured out seemingly without admixture; the land fails, and the people are consumed beneath the rebuke of judgment, when, in a moment, the scene is changed—changed suddenly, changed at once, changed in the twinkling of an eye, by the appearance of Him who is called the Branch of the Lord, beautiful and glorious. And surely this is a true representation of the change which passes upon human destinies when Christ the Lord comes down. We are naturally heirs of judgment. There is not a family, there is not a

heart, upon which the curse has not descended in disastrous entail; it has been transmitted from every father to every child; there is a stain upon the birth, there is a feebleness in the nature of us all. But there comes a sound of help and of deliverance, for a Saviour has been provided—a Saviour who, in the mysterious union of natures, combines perfection of sympathy and almightiness of power.

The second thought is His discipline for holiness within His Church. The great purpose of the Saviour's coming is declared to be 'that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy; even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.' Having wrought out an effectual atonement and provided the grace of a free life for all, what does the Saviour? He sits in His resumed royalty to watch and further the prosperity of His chosen Church. His delight is not in symmetry and strength, not in renown and riches; to Him in His heavenly rest there is no music like the music of a contrite soul.

Now, it would at once correct our estimate and restrain our pride if we could remember always that with God the greatest thing is holiness; that it is not the lofty in attainment, but the pure in heart who are to see Him; and that all the treasure which avarice amasses, and all the honour which ambition grasps, and all the fleeting satisfaction with which the world cheats those who trust it to their ruin, can avail nothing in a world where character is life, and where the smile of God is the source and spring of the fulness of joy. And then, further, we are told that to work this holiness in His people, God subjects them to discipline, and, if necessary, to the spirit of judgment and to the spirit of burning.

We must thus be humbled and proved if we would be clean, as they ought to be who bear the vessels of the Lord. Let us pray for the spirit of submission, the preparation for the promise, that the whole image of God may shine forth in us, His children. Not too fiercely will the fire be kindled; not too long will the fire be suffered to burn. Steadily the eye of the Omniscient watcheth, watcheth, watcheth, till from the molten silver the answering eye shall shine.

II. Note the promise itself: 'And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence.' As we read these words, we are translated to a former and well-remembered scene of deliverance. As we read them, we go back to the older ages; and there, in the fierce wilderness, a wilderness of drought and dreariness, where no wells drip from the water-courses, where no groves of palm-trees wave with shade, a vast host marching steadily, camping swiftly, now in their van for guidance, now in their rear for protection, there rises by day

a pillar of cloud and by night a pillar of flame; and, as we gaze and wonder, we listen to the snatches of their song as it trembles on the desert's accustomed silence: 'Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.'

This was the vision prominent in the mind of the prophet when he symbolised by it God's presence and protection to His chosen Church; and from the deliverance which made his patriot heart kindle within him, the deliverance wrought out for ancient Israel, he brings the same symbols as the symbols of deliverance for us.

There are three things—the presence of God, the presence of God for counsel, the presence of God for defence. 'And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence.'

W. M. PUNSHON,
Christian World Pulpit, Dec. 11, 1872.

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

Christ the Judge of all Men.

For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. S. JOHN v. 26, 27.

WE have so often talked and heard talked about a judgment day, and this with so little of earnest addressing ourselves to the tasks which such a day, rightly believed in, would impose upon us, that, in just punishment of these hollow, unreal words of ours, we have come, I will not say to disbelieve in such a day, but so to believe in it that it exercises the very slightest influence on our lives. The glorious retributions of that day do not rouse us to a more active well-doing. The dreadful terrors of that day do not drive us to the one hope of sinners—the Cross of Christ. And this most tremendous reality, when it moves us at all, it is rather in the region of our imagination than in that of our affections or our conscience.

I. In the text our Lord declares that all judgment has been committed to Him, that He has received authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Most blessed, most comfortable thought for those that, in the midst of many weaknesses, many infir-

mities and temptations, often, but not always, resisted, are seeking, with sincerity of purpose, to do His will, to walk in His truth. But —dreadful thought for the faithless and false-hearted !—God shall thus judge the world by the Man whom He has ordained. Infinite aggravation of their guilt, and therefore of their doom ! A Divine love men might profess themselves unable to understand, unable to measure with a corresponding love of their own. But how plead this against a human love, against *His* love who sought to draw men to Himself, and so to His Father, with cords *of a man* ?

II. While there are many judgment days in the world's story, that day is the complement and consummation of them all. In one sense, there are many judgment days. Every day is such, for Christ is a King now—a Judge among the nations, putting down one nation and setting up another; removing the candlestick of some apostate church, taking away the kingdom of God from these, and giving it to others that shall bring forth the fruits thereof. And as it is with nations and churches, so also with men in particular. How often the life of man is the judgment of that man ! With his own hands he has stricken the garlands of gladness from his brow ; and if he walks now discrowned, it is because he has discrowned himself; if threads of darkness and gloom are woven into the inmost tissue of his life, from which, for this life at least, they shall never be withdrawn, it is he himself who has woven them there.

Yet, while there are thus as many judgment days in the world's story as there are days, still, for all this, how imperfect, how incomplete, are they all ! How much is left in the rough, how much needing to be adjusted and set on the square, how much is evidently postponed, waiting the redress of a mightier day ! Do not let us, in thought of a future judgment, lose sight of a present ; do not let us, in view of a present, explain away a future which is in store. We cannot afford to let either, or our faith in either, go. Be it ours to keep, by God's grace, a firm hold on both these truths, and to believe in our God as one who both now *is* judging, and hereafter will judge, the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.

R. C. TRENCH,
Five Sermons, p. 85.

The Warning Note

Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. S. MATTHEW iii. 2.

FIRST STAGE OF CHRISTIAN YEAR.
Just entering it.
Our thoughts turned to the Advent of Christ.

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CHRIST EXPECTED, CHRIST DESIRED.

The night of fear and distrust, and delayed hope, far spent.
The day of Messiah's glory close at hand.
A picture of living, waiting nations, longing and looking for Deliverance.

Whether as (1) *Jews* looking for First Advent; (2) *Christians* looking for Second Advent, the saying is true, 'Now it is high time to awake out of sleep.'

It is the WARNING NOTE, not only of the Prophet in the Wilderness, but of the times in which we live, the heaving restless world: 'Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'

I. THE BAPTIST.

Consider him in his character, office, ministry, it was all *Preparatory, Temporary.* S. Matthew iii. 1: 'In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the Wilderness of Judæa,' etc.

(I.) The MESSIAH did not come without a herald.
The widespread expectation of the East was that some great one was about to appear.
All the Prophecies of The Messenger were so understood.
For 400 years no prophet. Malachi's words fulfilled in John the Baptist.
Supernatural Communication had ceased. No visible glory. No Urim and Thummim.
Popular excitement raised by the Angel's visit to Zacharias.
" " birth of the Child.
St. Luke i. 76: 'And thou, child, shalt be called,' etc.

(II.) The AUSTERITY and Training of JOHN THE BAPTIST fostered this:
Thirty years in the desert—to burst on the world at last like a clarion blast.
He came 'in spirit and power of Elias.'

HIS MINISTRY preparatory and temporary, pointing to the higher mission of *Christ.*

II. WHAT ADVENT LESSONS from this?

Two Words—'Repent ye!'

This the warning note *Now* in the spiritual world.
" " cry " human wilderness.

I. REPENTANCE not an act only in the past, but a continuous preparation for the Lord. A change in character, heart, life.

'*Repentance* begins in the humiliation of the heart, and ends in the reformation of the life.'

II. ADVENT must begin in the Soul. The truly penitent will believe, and he who truly believes will repent.

III. JOHN THE BAPTIST DIED FOR THE TRUTH. For some it is easier to die for it than to live for it.

Our way is plain. *He asks of us*, not Death, *but our life*, to be lived to and for Him.

'Constantly to speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake.' (Collect for St. John Baptist.)

The Preacher's Book, First Series, No. 1.

The Redeemer still among us in the Form of a Servant.

The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. S. MATTHEW XX. 28.

IN these words our Lord expresses the character of His manifestation upon earth, the solemn commemoration of which we begin to celebrate to-day with the beginning of the new Christian year. His manifestation on earth was a manifestation in the form of a servant. But we also know that it was only His first one, and that He will appear again, and then in glory. We are standing between these two manifestations. But He is with us still. Even after He was raised to the right hand of the Father the Lord did not cease to be in the midst of us, as He Himself promised us, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (S. Matt. xxviii. 20).

I. The Redeemer is even now among us in the form of a servant. This 'Us' is the Christian Church, especially the reformed branch of it, as being restored to its original purity, and every smaller division of it. We will not except even congregations from these smaller divisions. The Redeemer is with us. He certainly is still among us. His name, His manifestation, His kingdom has not yet ceased. We may behold His presence in the Church collectively, or direct our attention to the individual members of it; but according to either way of looking at the matter, in a very obvious manner He is with us, not in glory, but in 'great humility.'

Christ lives still in the present in the Church collectively. The remembrance of Him has by no means died away, as many would have us believe; so that he who belongs to the present age no longer asks where He is, or needs to do so. On the contrary, directly the present age asks concerning Him with anxious questioning of mingled hope and fear, she finds the answer in her noblest representatives and

children. The scoffers are silenced more and more, and he to whom Christ appears a matter of indifference or insignificance belongs to an age which lies behind us. Even for His friends, the Saviour is not here in glory, but in the form of a servant.

II. It is therefore a fact: He is not yet among us in glory, but in the form of a servant. What are we now to think of this fact? Whose fault is it that the Redeemer is still among us in the form of a servant? Perhaps His own? Does He then permit something to be wanting in revelations of His glory? No, certainly not. Since His entrance into this world He has exercised a truly royal and divine, because deifying, power in it, and He exercises it continuously and ever increasingly. Ask yourself, What would humanity be if we imagine the appearance of Christ removed from history? All that the world possesses of truth, faith, love, and hope, that which we accept without hesitation, as if it grew by itself in the world,—all this comes from Christ, who ungrudgingly distributes His treasures among those from whom He derives no benefit, who receive them without gratitude. No, Christ has not let us want for revelations of His glory, in that which concerns His activity in history at large; and just as little has He ceased to be manifest in His glory to individuals. They need not close their eyes to everything save the works of Christ in past history, only to contemplate Him as He has left His image behind. They have only to make trial of Him in prayer, for instance, in order to receive proof enough of His glory.

No, the fault is ours, in that we are wanting in a simple and true sense for the recognition of His glory. Here the true, that is, the perverse nature of our disposition clearly reveals itself, that our minds and our hearts are wanting in a sense of true sublimity and glory, that we may pursue mere appearances and things to dazzle us, and, knowing little how to honour holiness and love, how little we understand the purely divine and even the purely human!

How should we pass judgment on ourselves if we found in this life a man like Jesus, and did not cleave to Him with all our hearts, and give ourselves entirely to Him? The servant's form of Jesus, we might say, would conceal His glory from us. Vain excuse. He has only assumed it, that He may approach near us, that we may observe Him closely and confidingly in His truth,—that is to say, in His glory, and comprehend clearly His sublimity without being blinded, and especially that we might give our hearts to Him entirely as to our brother. And instead of this, His poor covering becomes an occasion for our passing Him by, and only honouring Him from afar with a casual attention.

R. ROTHE,

Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 1.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

The Last Judgment will be after the Manner of an Assize.

Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all (the) nations. S. MATTHEW XXV. 31, 32.

GOD in many ways, and all through their lives, judges men.

He judges them by conscience. When they have done what is wrong, then their conscience condemns them. When they have done what is right, then their conscience acquits them—not only acquits them, but at times applauds them. St. Paul tells us that the judgment of conscience takes place even among the heathen, who have had no revelation such as the Jews and Christians have had. (Rom. ii. 14, 15.)

This judgment of conscience is sometimes very terrible—it drives men to destruction—to despair—to self-destruction.

Then God judges men by His providence. He deals with them at times as they have dealt with others. Thus Joseph's brethren (Gen. xlii. 21) were forced to say, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother.'

In many ways He makes them clearly see that He is dealing with them in wrath for past sin.

Then He condemns them by the judgment of society, or by the judgment of the Church in such a thing as excommunication, or by the judgment of those whom they love and respect.

II. But the judgment of Christ at the last day will not be by any such means. The Judge will come publicly before all the universe—the whole world of angels, unfallen and fallen, and of men will be summoned to His bar. As we are told, The dead, small and great, stand before God. The sea gives up the dead which were in it. Death and Hades deliver up the dead which are in them (Rev. xx. 12, 13).

Every revelation of it sets it forth as the great assize. There will be the Judge who sits—there will be His retinue—there will be His assessors. There will be His angel ministers, by whose agency He will bring particular men before him.

But will a day, a day of twenty-four hours, suffice for this? But who says that it will be a day of twenty-four hours? With Him who will conduct the Judgment one day is as a thousand years, yes, and a thousand years as one day. He can compress years into moments. He can so arrange that men will see and hear that part of the judgment of the universe which most concerns them.

M. F. SADLER,
Sermon Outlines, p. 11.

ADVENT SUNDAY

Sleep and Waking.

Simon, sleepest thou? S. Mark xiv. 37.

THERE is a strange pathos in these words. They were spoken by a Friend to His friend; by a Friend in trouble such as man never knew, to a friend for whom (amongst others) that trouble was being endured. It was the question of Jesus Christ, in the garden of Gethsemane, to a disciple whom He had selected, with two others, to have the nearest access to His wrestling and to His agony. It meant, on His lips, and so addressed, 'Thou, My chosen friend—thou, My favoured disciple—thou, My partner in many toils, and now the selected witness of My soul's last strife—do I come back to thee for a moment's sympathy to find thee sleeping? Couldst not even thou keep awake with Me for one hour?'

The things written aforetime were all written for our learning. The sleep described was bodily sleep; that suspension of thought and motion by which a busy brain is tranquillised and a weary frame invigorated. But it is no fancy which sees in that slumber a type as well as a fact. The Word of God has consecrated the figures of sleep and waking to certain opposite states of the soul and spirit. 'While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.' 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' 'Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.'

Sleep, and waking, in the things of the soul; we have all known *one* of those—God grant that we may all have experience also of the other!

I. What is sleep, when transferred from a bodily sense to a spiritual?

(1) Sleep is *inactivity*. A sleeping man is no more than a dead man as to present action. True, the power is there; but the use is suspended. He lies a dead weight, every limb torpid, every faculty disused. The only difference betwixt this and death is, that to-morrow's rising is nearer (probably) than the great resurrection.

I say that we have all known what this state of inaction is in the things of the soul. Yes, alas! for we are fallen beings. We have all in us the taint of the original Adam. And that taint is, above all else, a suspension of the soul's activity. The soul's activity is intercourse with its God: a soul that cannot speak to God, and commune with God, and rest upon God, and ask blessings and receive answers from God, and do work for God—work of which the part that is seen is the *least* part—such a soul is inactive, such a soul is sleeping. So judged, what soul is awake?

(2) And sleep is *unconsciousness*. No matter how anxious may have been the yesterday, how distressing may be the to-morrow—if a man can but sleep, not only is the fool (for the time) as the wise man, but the wretched is (for the time) as the most blessed. It is a mercy—it is God's gift and God's grace—that there should be such an opiate for the miserable. 'If he sleep,' for the time at least 'he shall do well.' But that which is a blessing in regard to things of this life—that which alone makes life itself possible for a multitude of human beings, whose consciousness is a consciousness of pain, whose waking hours are one distress, one torture—is an evil as concerns the soul. If the soul sleeps the sleep of unconsciousness, it sleeps the sleep not of soothing, but of death. The unconscious soul is not a resting, but a delirious thing. For it, sleep is not a refreshment between two activities, but a vacancy and an idiotcy between a responsible past and a frightful future.

Sleep is an unconsciousness. It has a world of its own, but that world is a dreamy, an unreal thing; peopled with beings that are not, and impotent to represent to itself the true shapes and forms of things that are.

Which of us is there, who, if Christ should appear, would not be astonished? not only startled (who could be otherwise?) at His appearing, but in reality surprised even at His existence? Which of us really believes in Him as a real living Person? What can we call this but a state of spiritual unconsciousness? Is it not the *occupation* of many men to shut Christ out of sight? to persuade themselves while they can that there is no such person? to hope, even against hope, that His word may not come true, that His commands may not be binding, that His warnings may not be serious?

II. 'Simon, sleepest thou?' The words are words of *remonstrance*. *Canst thou be sleeping?* THOU sleeping?

There are three things in the question.

(1) Thou, *so favoured?*

On several occasions Simon Peter had been privileged to be with his Master when all but two others were excluded. The instances are familiar to all. But of all these marks of distinguishing affection none so tender or so impressive as this. It was the latest mark, and it was the greatest. It seemed strange that it should be lost upon him. Surely to be taken aside, at a moment so near parting, and at a moment of such evident distress, to see what was to be to the very end of time the marvel of marvels—a Saviour bearing upon His soul, and actually fainting under, the load of a world's sin—should have kept any one awake! '*Simon*, sleepest thou?' was more than '*Matthew*,' or '*Thomas*,' or '*Bartholomew*,' 'sleepest thou?'

(2) There is this also. Sleepest thou, *in the very sight of a Saviour suffering*?

The question has an application even to us. Christ is 'set forth before us,' as before the Galatians of old, 'crucified amongst us.' Again and again the sacrifice of the cross is rehearsed and re-enacted in the Word which describes and in the Sacrament which commemorates it. If we sleep like Simon, we sleep like him in sight of Gethsemane. None of us is ignorant what sin means, and what sin involves. We all know that it cost Christ heaven, and that it compelled the further humiliation of Calvary and the sepulchre. If we sin, we sin in the sight of the cross; if we sleep, we sleep in view of Gethsemane.

(3) A third and last thing. Sleepest thou, *in the very crisis of temptation*?

What made Simon's sleep so strange was, that he had been solemnly warned of a coming trial and an instant fall. 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation,' was the natural sequel to the question, 'Why sleepest thou?'

We think of Simon as we listen: we hear, and fear. So says the licentious man, in his morning remorse. 'Evening may come, and night, and again morning—I shall not fall; I shall not have fallen; I have sinned, and I have suffered—I have sinned, and I have repented—I shall not again fall.' Look away a little space; then turn, and he is just where he was; wallowing in the very sty of intemperance and of all uncleanness. Therefore we say, 'Simon, sleepest thou?' means, 'Canst thou bear to sleep when the tempter is so near; standing behind thy door; watching thy drowsiness, awaiting thy slumber?'

Not only is sleep a dangerous state for one who may be tempted: not only is spiritual wakefulness—as our Lord here says, 'watching and prayer'—the suitable state for one who may at any moment be put into the furnace of trial; around whom the devil is ever walking, as though in purpose and act to devour him: yet more than this,—sleep is a signal of temptation: he who is to attack successfully must first lull you to repose. It is the art of the enemy to persuade you that he seeks you not; nay (for such is one of the arts of our age), even that he *is* not; that you are safe, and may rest a while without fear of consequences. I know, when I am off my guard, that Satan is about. I know, when I begin a day without prayer, and end it without confession, that I am on the very brink of a sore temptation; more than probably of a shameful fall. 'Simon, sleepest thou?' is not only a reproof of ingratitude, not only a remonstrance against heartlessness; it is also the announcement of an enemy's approach, and a warning that, however ready the spirit, still the flesh is weak.

No man can live fifty years below, without acquiring a somewhat low opinion of human nature—his *own* nature first of all. His early hope is, that, a few struggles safely surmounted, all will be peace; that the onward course of a Christian will be all sunshine, and the latter end one prognostication of blessedness. He lives to unlearn all this. He lives to realise two truisms—that man is a fallen being, and that sin is as obstinate as it is sinful. It is thus that he is made willing to depart, and taught that to be with Christ will indeed be far better. It is thus that he is brought low before God, not only in the occasional remorse of a special transgression, but in the abiding consciousness of a corrupt nature and a sin-polluted heart.

(*a*) *Some are asleep and know it not.* How shall we know it? By this sign. What is God to us? Do we love to have Him with us? Do we call Him in, day by day, and many times in each day, as though to bless our enjoyments, as though to share our sorrows? He who can call God his Father, and mean it, and feel it, and live by it, is not asleep, but waking. To set God always before us is an infallible sign of watching. 'He is at my right hand: I shall not be moved.'

(*b*) Observe that *Jesus Christ cares whether we sleep or wake.* We are not left unnoticed, we are not overlooked, not put aside, in this great world of busy, bustling, suffering men! Christ has time, Christ makes time, in the management of a universe of matter and spirit, to speak repeatedly to each one of us, however sinful, however fallen, and say, 'Sleepest *thou*?'

(*c*) Lastly, *the punishment of sleeping is sleeping on.* Simon, sleepest thou? and again the second time, Simon, sleepest thou? and yet again the third time, Simon, sleepest thou? Then sleep on now, and take thy rest. The opportunity of watching is gone: 'Lo, he is at hand that doth betray Me!' Thus we become suspicious of all that favours our repose, and thankful for everything that breaks it. A severe word, a rough rebuke, a sharp stroke, from the Saviour of sinners, this shall be welcome to me: 'Let the righteous,' let the Righteous One, 'smite me friendly, and reprove me: but let not their precious balms,' the flatteries of the wicked, destroy my soul by encouraging that fatal lethargy which is the very sleep of death! 'Awake, thou that sleepest,' is the call of mercy: 'Sleep on now, and take thy rest,' is first the voice of the tempter, and at last the voice of the Judge.

C. J. VAUGHAN,
Plain Words on Christian Living, p. 1.

ADVENT SUNDAY

Merciful shall obtain Mercy.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. S. MATTHEW v. 7.

THE Blood of Christ must ever be our only hope. Through It alone can any sin be pardoned, any good be performed or accepted. This is His own ineffable love, out of which He died for sinners. Our Lord's words relate not to that in Himself, for which He pardoneth or accepteth us, but to that in us, for which He still vouchsafes to own us. Nor yet is it to be thought that this mark could exist in us apart from all other graces. Love, the foundation and summit of all virtues, the very bond of them all, which holds them together, and knits the soul in one to God, the life of faith, the mother of all good, the offspring of God, cannot be without them, since it is the very Presence of God in the soul. It is not then as a mark which may dispense us with cherishing all other graces, or which, if we think we have, we might be at ease, though struggling not to subdue all sin. God forbid! It is a mark above, not in place of, all other graces.

I. What then, it may be asked, is the special value of deeds of mercy, if the body must still be kept in subjection, if the same weary strife must still be kept up with the lusts which war in the members, if penitence still has its hardness, if in the memory of past grievous sin we must still wash our couch with our tears? These were indeed grudging questions; for every act of love to God or our neighbour were its own reward, even were there none beyond in store. Enough were it, that love is of God, that it likens us to God, who is Love; that it traces His Image on our soul, and He must love the soul which bears the faint lineaments of His all-perfect love. Yet our Lord does meet even this mistrusting craving. He tells us in this place that it has an especial value in the Day of Judgment, is the special ground of acceptance, that they who have it shall be blessed for ever, they who have it not shall be cursed for ever.

To each of us, amid our several sins, our Lord says, in those gracious words, 'Seek Me in My poor, and ye shall find Me. Ye cannot gain for yourselves the gift of tears; ye cannot warm your own chilled hearts; cannot gather together your own distracted thoughts; ye cannot undo what has been done, or regain what has been neglected; ye have spent your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not: ye have squandered your substance, and now these swine-husks will not satisfy you; but feed Me in My poor, and I will give you anew angels' food.'

Reverence the poor, as ye would reverence Christ; cherish little ones, for they are the lambs of Christ; He is everywhere, inviting

you, by those into whose hearts He has put to plan works of love for His members; everywhere are His members, neglected, suffering, dragging out dreary lives, dying hopeless deaths, because we have not yet a burning love for Him, who came down to earth to kindle the fire of His love, that it might ascend as a memorial well-pleasing to Himself.

E. B. PUSEY,
Parochial Sermons, p. 16.

The Advent Message of the Prophets.

As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began. S. LUKE i. 70.

THE prophets were men accredited with a direct message from God; they were not, that is to say, unconscious influences, they were conscious teachers. 'God spake by the prophets.' It was no searching for omens in the chance flight of birds, or presages in the smoking entrails of the sacrifice, or prophecies in the shaking leaves of the Dodona. 'God spake by the prophets.' They were conscious living agents of the Word of God, who condescended to use their human dialects, their intellectual powers, their devout lives as the media of His message, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' 'The men of God,'—this was their title, the motto as it were traced over their lives,—that is, they lived, and moved, and acted as men from another world. As they went up and down in the world, in the courts of kings, in the houses of the poor, speaking now of mercy, now of judgment, in sunshine and in sorrow, it was always this,—they were men from another world. They had been with God to receive His message, they knew something of that ceaseless work of God, of all that manifold and wonderful machinery wherein lives of men dart in and out, where nations appear, disappear, and reappear, a patch here, a tuft there, as the pattern unfolded at their feet; they know something of that marvellous marshalling of will which can shape a predestined end through all the shifting intricacies of free will; they stand by the side of that grim chess-table, and know why a false move is followed by a blow, and that a blow without a word; they know of that marvellous providence which counts the sparrows fallen and the lilies fading, the beauty of the grass which to-day is, and its withered death in to-morrow's oven. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' See how their restless activity shadowed out that great truth that the work is to be like God. And then, beside the works of God, they knew His mercy; their life is bright with the reflection of His mercy. These men of God, they see how all along He is ever opposing Himself to the awful waste, the wear and tear of sin. There

where the earthquake has torn the ground, there where the lightning has scarred the cliff, there where the torrent has swept over the smiling plain, He is gently weaving over it all the graceful cloak of verdure, or clothing the scar with colour, or restoring the drenched earth with the healing sun.

II. 'God spake by the prophets.' It is still true. He gives to certain men, He gives to all, but to certain men more than others, His message to deliver. We have been reminded over and over again in to-day's services, for instance, that He commits to His clergy a definite message which is theirs to deliver; that certain men are separated off by the barrier of ordination, admitted up into the mountain, admitted to contemplate His mysteries, and hear His words, ministers and stewards of His mysteries; that God intrusts still to them certain privileges for the benefit of their fellow-men, which they are bound to deliver; it is their sacred duty by prayer and the means of grace to stir up the gift that is in them, and then God gives them His message. But, when we have admitted this, we must remember also that there are other priests still, other prophets, others who have a conspicuous message from God which they are bound to deliver.

III. Once more, God spake by the prophets in this way: it is true that they were the conscious agents of a message, but it is also true that they were conscious embodiments of a witness. The prophet in his words, his life, his actions, having his great commission strong upon him, having the best interests of the nation, or a particular city, at heart, bore witness to the truth. Truth to him was everything. And they put truth first. The prophet was the organ of all that was most pure and loving in the popular conscience, the solemn witness against wrong, the remembrance of right. He was no exponent of the popular will: his duty was rather to recall people to their better selves. And the prophetic witness has never died out.

We need prophets still who will sacrifice anything rather than the truth; prophets in high places who, if driven backward and backward in tumultuous scenes, will die rather than betray principles. We need prophets in every-day life, men not ashamed to bear witness to the truth in the quiet home when there is so much hot controversy abroad; we want them in that quiet life, so that men may look at them as they work, and feel there is burning there a light, such a light as cheers a traveller as he passes over the wind-swept, desolate moor, and feels happy in the consciousness of companionship and of succour in the time of need. There is a fascination about a life that is hid with Christ in God: it is beautiful, because it shows, among other things, that such a life is possible. Here is a prophet's work for all of us to do; here is an Advent message which comes to us

with a double meaning in the midst of our sorrow as we anxiously seek how to prepare the way of the Lord. We all of us, if we will, can bear conscious witness to the truth, and as the light blazes up into the sky, first from one quiet mountain-top, and then from another, and peak after peak catches up the living flame and flashes out the message of redemption and holiness, then at least men will know that the redemption has come, and that the Day-spring from on high hath visited God's people.

W. C. E. NEWBOLT,
Family Churchman, Dec. 19, 1890.

The Last Advent Message

To Him the porter openeth. S. JOHN x. 3.

I. WHO is the porter sitting at the gate? The Good Shepherd we know; David knew Him, Ezekiel knew Him, Zechariah knew Him, and the sheep throughout history, as each day dawned, knew His voice. But who is the porter who has had the sheep in charge for the Good Shepherd? He is the last figure that sat at the gate of the sheepfold, the precursor of the Shepherd of His people, the forerunner of the King. Then, when the Jewish fold was about to give up its sheep once for all, and to be merged into something higher, there sits S. John the Baptist, and his message is 'Repentance.' This was the last Advent message before the Incarnation, this is the last Advent message before the day of the Lord: 'Repent, be baptized, the kingdom of God is at hand.' Pharisees, Sadducees, all Judæa, publicans, soldiers, all who pass through his hands, shall pass through them cleansed, white and pure. His message to the sheep, as they pass out to forget him, and to leave him, and to lose him in Another, greater and mighter than himself, is: 'Repent.' 'To Him the porter openeth.' The Baptist is the last and truest teacher and porter of the Jewish Church, and his great message is: 'Repent.'

II. And when he said this, what did he mean? Why, he asked them to feel sorrow. The Pharisee must feel: Well, I have made a false start. This satisfaction is not a good sign. The remedies I have chosen have not been painful, it is true, but they have not touched the seat of the disease; the knife and the burning is what I need. The Sadducee, too, he must see his great mistake. He has been reckoning up the great addition sum of life, leaving out figures from the top line. No wonder he is wrong! These, too, must feel sorrow. The long, weary investigation of past sin, past negligence, past ignorance, the broken and the contrite heart, broken up and pulverised with sorrow into soil once more receptive of good—it means driving

away the birds, diverting the mule-path, pulling up the trees, upheaving the rocks. Yes, when S. John said, 'Repent,' he meant that there must be true, deep sorrow, a broken and a contrite heart, which God has promised not to despise.

And he meant more than this. 'They were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.' It would have been easy for them to acknowledge that they were sinners with a kind of general self-depreciation, with a tender self-disparagement which suggests just a delicate veil of humility toning down the abrupt colouring of a character perhaps too crude. It would be easy, and in perfect good taste, to soften down the too striking contour of a proud individuality with a general confession which does but bless with faint blame. But, no; he wants more. He calls each to confess for himself the accumulation of a lifetime, to watch the tale of sin mounting up to its deadly total, until—like a spendthrift, who has had a sort of general idea that he has been extravagant, and is astonished as each bill adds its quota to the heavy debt, some forgotten, some under-estimated, some put away for another time,—he faces the accumulating mass and realises the enormity of the debt which he believed that he would some day be able to pay if God would only extend patience to him.

And then he had for each also, besides the sorrow, and besides the confession, he had, for each, his own method of amendment. On all sides of him rose the earnest inquiry: 'What shall we do? what shall we do?' The multitudes are asking, the publican, the soldier: 'What shall we do?' And his answer was not, 'Come and wear camel's hair, and eat locusts, and dwell in the desert with me.' No; might we not say there would have been some flaw in his message of repentance if it only served to dislocate, and put out, a man's life? To the multitude his message was: 'Be charitable. Prepare to meet Christ by acts of kindness. He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.' If they knew what it was to have wasted, let them show repentance by helping others, and by kindness brightening and making the world better. Such is the message of that porter who held the gate at the last moment before the dawn, such was the teaching of repentance which was to prepare the way of the Lord. Repentance—a hard task! Very different from the easy 'Lord, Lord,' which now surges backwards and forwards outside the gate which leads unto life. Repentance is troublesome, but it is the will of God. 'Lord, Lord,' is easy enough, but it has no promise of rolling back the gate which bars the access to the kingdom of Heaven.

W. C. E. NEWBOLT,
Family Churchman, Dec. 26, 1890.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

The Individuality of the Last Account

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. ROMANS xiv. 12.

OBJECTIONS there are to some of the truths of religion, which, though not reduced to argument, nor sufficiently cogent to lead men to a denial of such truths, nevertheless have the power to undermine them, and to neutralise the influence they ought to exert over men's hearts and lives. These objections cannot be called arguments; they are, more properly, impressions against the truths in question, than even objections; but their mischievousness who can doubt? Though they float upon the surface rather than sink into the soul of the world, yet as a straw or a hair may disorder or bring to a stand a piece of mechanism, so do these floating impressions unhinge the operations of the apparatus of eternal verities and divine realities upon the mind of man.

As an instance of what we mean, we need not seek further than that verity which the solicitude of the Church, regardful as she ever is in her services of the everlasting weal of her children, endeavours to press upon our attention, and with all its terrible associations to crowd home upon our thoughts at this season,—the general, involving as it does the particular, the individual judgment of the quick and dead, at 'Christ's appearing and kingdom,'—that final audit of the world's debts towards God, and towards each other, at which we shall all have to 'give account.'

I. The holy Apostle gathers up the subject into a perspicuous compass in these words: 'So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.' Let this weighty truth be well pondered; it is most specific and personal. We are what we are, at any given period of our lives, not by accident, not by the influence of a power beyond us, or the exertion of an agency above us, but mainly of and from ourselves. As the silkworm weaves its web out of its own body, so do we weave our destiny in the eternal world out of our own souls. It is true that men are the authors of actions; it is also true that actions are the authors of men—they revert to the formation of the man. A man ultimately is what his actions have made him. The doctrine here laid down strikes at the root of that notion, too prevalent in the world, that a man may go on sinning, yet be none the worse for it. This cannot be; the supposition is as unphilosophical as it is irreligious. A man must be the worse for his sin, if he have not repented of it; nor is there a surer sign that he is so than his supposition to the contrary.

II. Now a sinner may try to persuade himself that he will somehow or other be a different person when brought into judgment from

what he was when he committed the deeds to be judged; that death will, by some means, operate a wondrous change in his condition. The Apostolic declaration, however, goeth to show that it is our personality that is to be judged; that we are to 'give account of ourselves,' as we shall be found to be at the period of our summons, our then state having been constructed out of the materials supplied by the works of past years. What possible alteration can take place so as to render dubious our identity? We know that we are each of us his particular self at present; and can we imagine we shall not be ourselves hereafter, but some other? Men are apt to flatter themselves that certain events and circumstances in life will make them different from what they are; that if they should be able to achieve this, or to overcome that, they will be forthwith the subjects of a great change; but lo! so soon as the event looked forward to is past and gone, they find themselves to be just what they were perhaps; and death itself, when it cometh, will effect as little alteration in our essentiality as any other circumstance. So the saints of God assure us that the particular judgment which is to pass upon all men, whereby each one will know for certainty what he hath to wait for during the season of expectancy between death and the resurrection, will take place in a silent, secret, invisible manner, at the moment of dissolution, on the very spot where the person departeth. St. Augustine teacheth, that it will be 'instantaneous.' So that, as we said, howsoever difficult we may find it to understand how God shall judge the whole human race, it is easy to see how He can judge *us*; it is but for God to give us to know ourselves as we are, as He knoweth us at the hour of death, and it is done.

III. And if so it be, that nothing a man possesses is so truly his own as his sins; if these sins react to the formation of a particular self; if it may be said that the sinner is the necessitator of his Judge, rather than the Judge is the Chooser, and that he punishes himself, rather than that God punishes him; and that all this comes to pass in its measure, even in this present world;—it is also true that in this world the sinner may judge himself; and thus so realise the individuality of the final account as to ward off the retribution of the Most High. So far as we judge ourselves we shall not be judged. We may anticipate the verdict of the last day by self-judgment now. We must deal severely with ourselves, if we hope for God to deal kindly; we must show no mercy to ourselves, if we expect God to show us mercy. There is neither peace nor penitence without self-severity: we cannot repent unless we know what to repent of, and that it is ours to repent of it as if there were no sins in the world but ours, no sinners but ourselves.

A. B. EVANS,
Warnings of Advent, p. 137.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

Apostolic Announcement of Second Advent.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, etc.

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 1, 2.

I. THE Apostle is here evidently addressing men who had conceived a wrong opinion as to the nearness of the Day of Judgment. He beseeches them by the very event, and by the solemn interest which all Christian men have in it, that they would give up this mistaken notion however they might have become familiar with it. He goes on to explain (1) that previous to the tremendous transaction a certain other appalling event must take place, to be followed by the discovery of Antichrist.

How does it come to pass, if the Apostles were indeed aware that the Day of Judgment was still distant, that they so frequently use language which seems to imply its very near approach indeed?

II. We must remember that their language is the established language of the prophets from the beginning. Ever since the Fall, the Second Advent of Christ was ever the one great event for which the whole human race was ever looking; and all, as many as God hath ever sent to be watchmen to the House of Israel, He hath instructed to herald His approach in the same unvarying formula, 'The Lord is at hand.' There is generally something mysterious and unexpected in the notes of Time which are found in the utterances of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They create rather than remove difficulties.

And yet, after all, the simplest, humblest faith is ever the wisest and the best. The Lord must be at hand, because the Lord Himself hath said it. He at the end of the days,—he will find himself in the right, who has believed in the nearness of the Second Advent; who has accepted the message in the letter of it; who has lived and died in the constant apprehension, 'Behold, the Judge standeth before the door.'

F. W. BURGON,

Ninety-one Short Sermons, No. 2.

The Coming Day.

Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints. S. JUDE 14.

INTRODUCTION.

THE SAINTS OF GOD, living, fallen asleep, } are waiting in devout expectation the Second Advent of Christ.

The Coming day of God, the time when *He* who is their

life shall appear, and they also shall appear with *Him* in glory.

They know *He is gone back*, to set in order His Kingdom.

" " " to accomplish number of His elect.

The approach of that Day, not slow;
prophecy fulfilling itself—the end approaching.

At the time S. Jude wrote these words, the Church of Christ was being torn by converts from Judaism, men of lax doctrine and evil life.

He refers to familiar traditions of the O. T.

These not related by Moses, yet accepted as facts.
- Sin and punishment of the fallen angels.
- The preaching of Noah.
- The distress of Lot.
- Prophecy of Enoch: 'Behold, the Lord cometh,' etc.

THIS COMING OF THE LORD under THREEFOLD ASPECT.

I. As a Fact.

The return of Christ in person, to execute judgment, to set up throne of righteousness, is one of our revealed certainties.

II. The Time.

Still no promise of His Coming.
- Enoch, seventh from Adam, prophesied them.
- Job, Daniel, and Zechariah.

Yet near 2000 years.
- S. Paul—'Wait for the Coming,' etc.
- S. James—'The Coming of the Lord draweth nigh.'
- S. Peter—'The end of all things at hand.'

The world's life but a day.
- Jesus Himself in Book of Revelation—'I come quickly.'

As that storm roars the loudest which has been longest gathering, so God's reckoning day with sinners, by being long coming, will be the more terrible when it comes.—Guthrie.

III. The Manner of Christ's appearing. It will be visible. We shall see Christ in no spiritual sense.

Job—'In my flesh shall I see God.'

'Every eye shall see Him.'

His radiance will appear greater contrasted with His former humiliation.

It will be triumphant.

'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of Angels' (Psalm lxviii. 17).

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

LESSON.

Is our Advent Preparation a reality?

Men think little now of Christ's Coming.

It is Past and done with = Christmas; or,

It is Future and intangible = Advent.

The Preacher's Book, First Series, No. 4.

The End of all Things.

And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Revelation xxi. 6.

BUT now! to think of all as 'done!' How it would bring most of us to a startled stand-still, as when men are stopped at once in the midst of an eager impetuous course, and their whole selves seem shaken by the sudden check.

I. 'It is done.' We are, mostly, ever looking forward, and this Voice turns us round at once, and bids us look back. We are, too often, living in an earthly future; *then*, all of earth will be past and 'done.' Now men are looking on; and hope is as that glass which enlarges things distant; look back, and all shrivels and contracts into a speck, and can no longer fill either eye or heart. How large and long seemed this one year to many, when they entered it; how full, to many, of hopes, and cares, and schemes, and pleasures! What a mere point it has become now! Nothing of it remains, but the traces it has left upon our souls, good or bad. Any of us may deceive ourselves anew if they will, as to the next, and the next, and the next. They cannot, if they will look steadfastly at it, deceive themselves as to the past. They may, if they will, fill the future and their minds with unreal things, with hopes which shall never be; they may 'chase the wind,' 'to reap the whirlwind;' in this life's desert, the fiery wastes in the distance may seem like water; when reached they are but sand. No revel but seems miserable in the morning light; no sin but is sickening when fulfilled. The past preacheth stern truth, if we will but hear. It is real. It has come to an end; and so in it we may see things as they shall be in the end. Scarcely the most abandoned sinner can endure the past. When the miserable pleasure or gain is over, scarce any but must hate the memory of past guilt. And so, man would ever escape from it, stifle his bitter memories of the past, forget himself and anew look onward, ever begin his course of worldliness or sin anew, and hide from his eyes its end. And God would ever turn him back upon himself, and in the end of each portion of his life make him read the end of all things and his own.

II. And we ourselves are witnesses to ourselves in earthly things. In them ye doubt not that the end is the touchstone of their value. Ye prize not what looks fair to the eye, but what endures; not what gives good promise, but what fulfils it; not schemes on paper, but realities; not the rich purple glow of morning, but the day's calm abiding brightness; not the beginning, but the end. 'Call no man happy before his death,' said once a wise heathen. We judge of things as they tend towards their end; contain, in a manner, their end in themselves, secure it. Well-laid schemes ye call those which in every step look to, advance towards, their end. Worldly wisdom is that which gains its end. And shall not Divine Wisdom be that which gains its own unending end, the end of all ends, the Everlasting God?

And so our Blessed Lord, lest His Blood should have been shed for us in vain, carries us beyond this world, beyond all time, and places us at 'the end.' Then, when kingdoms are burnt up, and the whole earth passes away like a scroll, see, if thou canst, mark well, thy own petty objects of desire, for which thou art now ready to sell thy soul; thy petty gains, for which thou wilt part with the golden streets of Heaven; the limbs of flesh, for which thou wilt exchange the embrace of God; thy poor pride, for which thou barterest everlasting glory.

This then can be the only measure of the value of things in time; what shall be their value when time itself is gone? Even a heathen was taught of God to say, 'The whole life of the wise is a thinking on death.' That only is wise to be done, which in death ye shall wish ye had done. 'Whatsoever thou takest in hand,' saith the son of Sirach, 'remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss.' 'O that they were wise,' saith God Himself, 'that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.' Wherever, then, we may be, in the course heavenwards, morning by morning let us place before ourselves that Morning which has no evening; and purpose we to do that, and that only, which we shall wish we had done when we shall see it in the light of that Morning when in the Brightness of His Presence every plea of self-love, which now clouds our eyes, shall melt away. Evening by evening, set we before us that night 'wherein no man can work,' and resolve we, by God's grace, to work on the morrow, if we see it, more steadfastly the works of God.

E. B. PUSEY,
Parochial Sermons, p. 1.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

The Second Advent.

The time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. REVELATION xxii. 10-12.

IN the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels appointed for the services of Advent, our Church has been careful to keep in view the relation which the first coming of our Lord bears to His second and final Advent to judge the world. And the association between these two events is strictly natural and appropriate, inasmuch as, to any one capable of serious thought, the one event naturally suggests the other; and it is impossible to have any adequate idea of the purposes of our blessed Lord being born into the world, unless we contemplate the infant Jesus, as fulfilling His ministerial offices, as dying upon the cross, as risen from the dead, as ascended into heaven, as sitting at the right hand of God, and as finally coming at the end of the world to judge both the quick and the dead. All these events, and nothing less, we commemorate by implication, so often as we commemorate our blessed Lord's Nativity: but more particularly are the two extreme events, the first and the last events, the first beginning and the ultimate object, become inseparably associated in our minds, and still more so, as they are events similar to each other, both being supernatural appearances of the Son of God amongst sinful men.

But the *contrast* between these two events is not less remarkable than their *association*, nor has our Church failed to observe this, and to employ it to our edification. It is the same Jesus, who comes in both instances, but how different is His appearance, and the purpose of His coming! In the manger of Bethlehem we behold the infant Jesus, the outcast of the common inn, the destined heir, like ourselves, of sorrow, and suffering, and death. But when He cometh in the clouds of heaven, His appearance and His ministerial character will be changed. The lowly estate of a servant will be exchanged for the throne of Him who is the Lord of all, King of kings, and Lord of lords. He shall come in the unutterable glory of the Divine Majesty, surrounded by His holy angels, the heaven and the earth shaking terribly, 'the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood;' He shall come once more to this earth, and 'every eye shall see Him,' and 'ten thousand times ten thousand shall stand before Him.' And while His changed appearance is such as no heart can conceive, such as even the Scriptures themselves cannot adequately describe, a change not less awful will have taken place in the purpose of His appearance. The dispensation of mercy, which had been in successive generations

offered to mankind, will then be brought to an end; the time of retribution is at hand. The Redeemer of the world, the Saviour of all them that obey Him, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may be converted and live; the same all-merciful Being is now become the righteous Judge, 'to give every man according as his work shall be.'

I. The volume of the New Testament, which begins with the miraculous birth of Christ, closes also with the annunciation of His triumphant return. S. Matthew's first chapter relates His first coming, and the last chapter of the Revelation (from which the text is taken) describes the second Advent of the same person; and the last words of God's Spirit, speaking unto us by the prophet of the Gospel, convey this awful warning: 'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'[1]

With this concluding verse the words of the text stand in immediate connection, and thus, in fact, belong to those awful parting words, which are the last communication made by our blessed Saviour to His beloved disciple S. John.

'The time is at hand. I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.' Here is a motive for a godly life and conversation, a motive for patience and watchfulness, far above all motives that ever were placed before man. The certainty of a future life, a life of happiness or of misery; the certainty of a future judgment to be pronounced by an omniscient God; the suddenness of that Judge's appearance; the publicity of the proceedings before men, and angels, and God; the irrevocable and eternal nature of the sentence to be pronounced:—all these particulars are such as might be expected to give a colouring to every action, every word, every thought of our lives: for between this final day of account and the every-day concerns of life, there is an association, not the less real because it is little observed.

II. And yet, when we turn to facts, how melancholy is the conviction, which the minister of the Gospel must often experience, of the inefficacy even of these momentous truths to awaken the slumbering consciences of men. The careless hearer listens for a moment, and then turns to the more congenial occupations of the life that now is; the sinner 'goeth on still in his wickedness;' the hypocrite still whitens the outside of the sepulchre, although he hears that a day is coming, when, before men whom he has feared, and before God whom he has not feared, he will be compelled to proclaim with his own tongue the secrets of the heart. This insensibility to warnings such as these is obviously implied in that striking part of the text, 'he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he which is filthy, let him be

[1] Rev. xxii. 20.

filthy still;' which words, as they stand in our translation, may be thus paraphrased, 'The approach of the time furnishes a warning, which the sinner *may* or *may not*, but which he probably *will*, disregard. If then, it is his choice to continue in sin, he must take his own course. The warning is before him, and if he disregards it, it is useless to call him to repentance; he must be abandoned to himself, no higher warning can be given, no further time allowed him; the Judge is coming quickly, and will find him in his sins.'

Striking as this meaning certainly is, a still more edifying lesson remains hidden in the text. Our translation, so incomparable in general, has hardly given the force of the original words, the full sense of which is this: 'He who acts unjustly, let him act unjustly still; and he who acts filthily, let him act filthily still; and he who is just, let him be justified still; and he who is holy, let him be sanctified still.' Now, without entering curiously into all the grammatical niceties of the passage, it will be at once perceived that a difference is made in the mode of speaking of the wicked doers described in the two first clauses, and of the good in the two last. The wicked are spoken of as agents, allowed to act of their own free will, *acting wickedly*, but not *made* wicked. The righteous, on the contrary, those who have chosen the good part, are spoken of as *made* still more righteous. The wicked act wickedly of themselves. The righteous are made more righteous by strength not their own. He who has attained, by the means of grace, to a certain point of holiness, is continually sanctified, made more holy still, by the influence of God's Holy Spirit. The contemplation of the impending judgment, which hardens the one class, enables the other to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

R. W. JELF,

Sermons Doctrinal and Practical, p. 14.

The Eagles and the Carcase.

Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.
S. MATTHEW xxiv. 28.

THE usual way of explaining this verse is, of the assembling of the armies of God's vengeance against any nation or Church that has lost its life and energy, and which is fit for nothing but destruction: particularly referring to the judgment on Jerusalem which our Lord had just been foretelling, so that the eagles should represent the Roman armies, by whom the city and temple were to be destroyed. And the same image is undoubtedly used in this sense in some other

passages of God's Word; and the warning it conveys is, under many circumstances, a needful and important one. But common as this view is, it seems to be a mistake to explain the passage so. The sense in which it was always understood in the ancient Church, and which seems more appropriate to the context and occasion of our Lord's words, is a very different one, more mysterious, and, though at first sight it may seem strange or startling to a modern fancy, one which yet we shall find more beautiful and edifying.

I. Our Lord says that when He does in truth come there will be no mistaking the fact, no possibility of doubt; it will be no longer a matter of faith, but evident to the natural perception of the whole world. 'As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.' Then He says that the faithful will still know Him better than others: when He is come and they stand before Him—'Every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him'; but before then, those that love Him will have sought Him out, and fly to Him, by an instinct as sure as brings a bird of prey to her natural and accustomed food.

Yet it is not only of the Day of Judgment that He is speaking, but of the time before it, as appears by the next verse. He speaks of that time which has proved so much longer than the disciples expected. He tells how the eagles will gather together to the Body, not only when the Son of Man shall send His Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other, but during the tribulation of these days that come before. As the season of Advent is drawing near, we are led to the thought of our Lord's coming, which is to be kept constantly before us then, so it is our business in this life to anticipate His real coming, anticipate it in act, as one may almost call it, as well as in thought: to fly on the wings of the Spirit to the place where the crucified Body is, not waiting for the day when we hope to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

It is true that our Lord's language thus understood is startling in the force or boldness of its image; but this should not lead us to try and alter the sense that the words naturally bear; rather to acknowledge the surpassing importance of a lesson which He has seen fit to word so strongly and almost painfully. A Christian man durst not for reverence sake have used the figure that He uses of Himself—we could not speak of Him, the risen and ascended, as a dead body, or conceive of Christian souls flocking together to feast upon Him; but the more we fear to use such language, the more we should recognise His unutterable condescension in using it of Himself, and the greater should be our thankfulness to Him, for allowing

us both the thought and the reality. That He should have taken upon Him such relations to us as make this language fitting is surely the extreme, both of His love and His humiliation: here He has emptied Himself of glory to the very last, and made Himself of no reputation to the uttermost.

II. Let us then, adoring our Saviour for these words of His, consider the words and seek to see all that is meant by them; what and where the Carcase is to which we are to gather, and what is meant by the gathering of the eagles. As to the first of these, there can be no doubt: He must mean to speak of our salvation by His Death. The Body by which we live is the Body that was dead; and even in its new life the tokens remain of the death that it has passed through and overcome. He will come with all His wounds, such as they were when He was dead, or when He showed them to the apostles, and offered them to S. Thomas to touch. And there is yet a further reason for the word He uses. In His own nature, that is, the human nature that He has made His own, He is 'He that liveth and was dead,' as He is also at the same time the living God, Alpha and Omega: 'Behold, I am alive for evermore.' But in a mystery we may speak and think of His Death as not past, but constantly and continuously present,—present now that to our minds it is past, as it was present while to human minds it was future, so that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. Or even if we are not authorised to speak of this as a mystery in His own Nature, it is at any rate true that, for certain effects of His Death, He is, to us, still lying dead—dead, not in Himself, but relatively, yet not therefore less really. The central doctrines of S. Paul's religion are the Death and Resurrection of Christ; but S. Paul's religion does not rest on mere past historical events, things that have happened once and are over; such a religion would be no gain in exchange for the living God of the Hebrew Prophets. The death of Christ that S. Paul preached as the Gospel of Salvation was as truly, almost as literally, a present abiding fact as the risen Life that was its complement and completion; for he called upon Christians to share in both, to be dead and buried with Christ as well as risen and ascended with Him. His work in His own Person is indeed completed once for all: Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more. But to us He is ever suffering, dying, redeeming, triumphing, ascending, as each single soul, from among those He died for, either forces Him to suffer or seeks to suffer with Him, either resists His triumph or shares it.

III. It is a thing strangely full of comfort that we are allowed to think of Christ as still dead. The knowledge of His present Life is not enough to suit all the wants of our minds. In trouble or depression of mind—still more when the conscience is burdened by any sin

—the soul has not the vigour and sense of freedom that would enable it to share consciously the Life of the risen and living Christ. At such a time, to look on the King in His beauty would only dazzle or overpower us. We may know, as a matter of fact, that He is in Heaven; but it is a fact that has no power over us, except when we feel ourselves rising to meet Him there. The memory of His Death is the thought that is never out of time; this commands our attention in every mood of mind, and gives the needful correction for each. In sorrow it assures us of His sympathy, in penitence of His forgiveness; if we feel our sins a burden it tells us of His Atonement; if we think of them too lightly, or forget them too soon, it reminds us of their guilt by the most awful proof, that they cost His blood. And even when He has given us the power and the right to rejoice in Him, and triumph with Him, still the thought of His Death is the law and the condition of our joy. Not only that the memory of the past sorrow is needed to chasten the mind, but that it is an element even in the happiness itself. The Death of Christ is not only the measure of our sin, but also of His own love: the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, are all measured by the Cross; and to comprehend this is the whole joy of all the Saints, the thing which the Angels desire to look into. We have equal need, if we would be Christians, to *be* dead with Christ and to be risen with Him: but it is oftener salutary for us to be *conscious* of the death than of the life.

And yet it is not the only relation we have to Christ's Death, to remember it or even to share it. Here He speaks of a dispensation whereby He lies dead and helpless, and we live and are free. It is almost as though He had said, as His apostle did after Him, 'We are glad when we are weak and ye are strong.' He has done so much for us that He has no power to do more: He has given His life so freely for us that in a manner He has given it to us—it has passed from His possession into ours. 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' He says; but it is also true that because He died therefore we live. We are strong and free to fly where we will; but if we have the true eagle's nature there is no doubt where that will be. That soaring heavenward aspiration, the eye which looks direct upon the Sun of Righteousness; the last of the mysterious natures united in the Cherubim; the spirit of that living creature, in which ages of Christians have delighted to discern the image of the beloved Disciple—this is the temper that discerns Christ. He is far out of sight: no other creature has the faculty to discern His presence, no other has means to know that He is there at all: but the believer has a special sense of his own to discern, a special instinct to pursue, the Body that was slain for him; he has that sevenfold Spirit, which

makes him of quick understanding in the way of the Lord. He who loves Jesus flies to Him, he knows not how or why; somehow, by a mysterious instinct, he is led to follow one course among the many before him, and finds it, unexpectedly perhaps, to end in the presence of Him he loves. A train of thought, a change of opinion, a new state of life, an outward event, every half-conscious choice and every seeming chance, helps to waft him to that for which his nature craves; he never stops till he reaches and feeds on that.

IV. And again, there can be no doubt that these words will have a special truth in relation to the Day of Judgment, though our Lord is not speaking of that only. We know not when or where He will come; but time and place will be made known surely and instinctively to all that love His appearing. It has been thought, from some expressions in the Prophets, that He will return to earth at the very spot where He left it, that His feet will again stand upon the Mount of Olives, and that the nations will be gathered before Him in the valley of the Kedron, to be judged by Him where He was taken and led away to judgment. But whether there, among holy and famous memories, or in some spot unknown and unexpected, He will come to some one place, upon the earth or immediately above it; and wheresoever He comes, all, whether near or far, will discern the evidence of His presence and assemble to meet Him. Those who have long looked for Him, and traced the signs that He foretold as each of them has come to pass, will gather eagerly and joyfully to meet Him whom they have expected. The many generations that have waited for Him all their days, and that fell asleep before He came, will awake at the first trumpet-blast that tells of His approach, and all, both quick and dead, will gather instantly: the air will be full of them. The dead in Christ shall rise first: from graves all over the world's surface, from the depths of the ocean, from the sand-drifts of the desert, from places where they died without even such a grave, by fire or beasts, those who have loved Him will assemble round Him, an exceeding great army. 'Then we which are alive'—'we,' the apostle said: let us say so, to make the thought as present and personal to us as it was to him—we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall be ever with the Lord—we, if we are fit to meet Him. But if we have not now the strong, enlightening, all-discerning instinct of love; if our heart and nature does not force us to fly to the Saviour now, to seek the Body where it lies,—on the Mercy-seat in Heaven, on the Altar of the Church,—how can we hope that our spirits' sense will be keener, or their wings stronger, in that day, when those whose life is not sustained by that dead Body will lose even the semblance of life?

W. H. SIMCOX,

The Cessation of Prophecy, p. 185.

ADVENT SUNDAY

The Resemblance between the Flood and the Second Coming of Christ.

As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.
S. MATTHEW xxiv. 37.

FROM this day our Church begins to direct the meditations of all those who use her ritual, more especially to the advent, or arrival of our blessed Redeemer upon this our earth. The great mystery of godliness, 'God manifest in the flesh,' is, indeed, a doctrine of so much comfort and importance, that it must, in some degree, enter into all the serious and devotional reflections of the Christian. But it is the intention of the Church, at this season, to lead her congregations in a particular manner to the practical consideration of this mysterious event. She presses forcibly upon our minds the great purpose of Christ's coming in the flesh; and urgently entreats us to perform our part towards its accomplishment: she reminds us, that 'the Son of Man was manifested to destroy the works of the devil'; and that, therefore, at this time more especially, we should bring home this glorious truth to our own case, by renouncing those sins, which required so inestimable a sacrifice, and by not allowing 'sin to reign in our mortal bodies, to obey it in the lusts thereof'; she implores us to 'cast away the works of darkness, and to put upon us the armour of light'; she wills us to 'embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,' which Christ Himself hath given us; she would apply the commemoration of His blessed advent to 'turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just':—and all for this momentous purpose that, at Christ's second coming to *judge* the world, 'we may be found an acceptable people in his sight.'

Now, the resemblance between the flood and the coming of the Lord will consist principally in its awful nature in itself; its sudden arrival upon mankind, immersed in sin and utter recklessness; and its unsparing, universal desolation.

I. With respect to the first, we read that 'the heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men': that in that day 'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up'; and that, at the same time, 'the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with His mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that

obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Whether by volcanic eruptions, or intense lightning, or vast central fires, or by whatever other process this final consummation will be effected, it is neither possible nor profitable for us to know; neither can we penetrate into the purposes of God, to discover what shall become of the present frame or body of this earth after its destruction, or the decomposition of at least its surface by fire; suffice it for us to be assured that this awful visitation awaits it.

II. But this visitation is to come suddenly also, like the flood. 'The day of the Lord,' says S. Peter, 'will come as a thief in the night.'—'Of that day and hour,' said our Saviour, 'knoweth no man; no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only.' It *may* be now at hand; it *may* require the lapse of ages before it arrives; but when it does come, it will take the perverse and obdurate sinner, the wilful and ungrateful scoffer, the hardened and rebellious apostate, by a fatal surprise,—totally unprepared, secure, careless, and impenitent.

III. The desolation will be universal. All that shall then be in possession of life; all that cheers, and adorns, and fertilises this fair planet; all that man has cultivated, raised, invented; all that he has wrought with his hands or his genius; all that the united wisdom of generations has instituted, or the labour of ages effected,—the governments, the arts, the records, monuments, writings, edifices, of every nation under Heaven,—shall be dissolved, and for ever totally obliterated.

Death may be said to be, in our case, the coming of the Son of Man. For, when once this earthly tabernacle of ours shall have been dissolved, our destination will be in a manner fixed: the sum of our guilt or righteousness will be settled, and we shall rise only to bliss or misery, adjudged to us from the great tribunal of the last day. 'It is appointed unto men,' we are told, 'once to die; but after this the judgment.' Now, death has all the uncertainty of the events which we have been considering; but it rests with ourselves, through the merits and mercies of Christ, to strip it of many, if not of *all*, its terrors, however suddenly it may come. 'The sting of death,' we know, 'is sin'; yet, aided by the grace, and arrayed in the merits of Christ, we may extract its venom: our feeble efforts, our imperfect righteousness, shall be accepted; and in His strength we shall be more than conquerors. 'And thanks,' indeed, 'be to God, which giveth us this victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

A. B. EVANS,

Sermons on the Christian Life and Character, p. 66.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Love and Law.
Rom. xiii. 10.

We may be as orthodox as Athanasius and as scrupulous as Jerome; we may be daily and ostentatiously building to God seven altars, and offering a bullock and a ram on every altar, and yet be as sounding brass and as a clanging cymbal, if our life shows only the leaves of profession, without the golden fruit of action. If *love* shows not itself by deeds of love, then let us not deceive ourselves,—God is not mocked,—our Christianity is heathenism, and our religion a delusion and a sham.

The Lord's Need.
S. Matt. xxi. 3.

The Lord hath need of us. There is another sense than the common in which these words may be spoken at least. The Lord hath need of our sufferings; now He has need of our pleasures. He often visited us in this world under types and shadows; now He has need of us that we may dwell with Him for ever, beholding Him in His beauty, inheriting the land that is very far off.

Royal Triumphs.
S. Matt. xxi. 3, 7.

This method of showing honour was by no means peculiar to the Jews, but common to Oriental, and perhaps also European, nations from the earliest times. It was in this way that honour was paid to the conqueror of Troy on his return to his palace at Argos, when his faithless queen commanded—'Straight let the way be strewn with purple robes, lest the foot that has trampled on the pride of Ilium should touch the ground.' Representations of triumphal processions which have come down to us from ancient times show that practice to have been common. We may see examples on the walls of Hampton Court Palace and in our National Gallery, in the representations of Caesar's triumph.

Popular Applause.
S. Matt. xxi. 9-13.

Speaking of the early days of Queen Mary's reign, Mr. Froude says: 'When the lords with the mayor and heralds went to the Cross at Cheapside to proclaim Mary as Queen, there was no reason to complain of a silent audience. Pembroke stood out to read, and could but utter one sentence before his voice was lost in the shout of joy which thundered into the air. "God save the Queen!" rang out from ten thousands of throats. "God save the Queen!" cried Pembroke himself when he had done, and flung up his jewelled cap and tossed his purse among the crowd. The glad news spread like lightning through London, and the

pent-up hearts of the citizens poured themselves out in a torrent of exultation. Above the human cries, the long-silent church-bells clashed again into life: first began S. Paul's, where happy chance had saved them from destruction; then, one by one, every peal which had been spared caught up the sound; and through the summer evening and night, and all the next day, the metal tongues from tower and steeple gave voice to England's gladness.'

Formal Religion. Isaiah i. 11.

Dickens describes how in Genoa he once witnessed 'a great festa on the hill behind the house, when the people alternately danced under tents in the open air and rushed to say a prayer or two in an adjoining church bright with red and gold and blue and silver: so many minutes of dancing and of praying in regular turns of each.'

Crimson and Scarlet. Isaiah i. 18.

Those who search for old scraps of linen to manufacture them into paper, tell us that the stains most difficult to remove are those which are from crimson and scarlet dyes. A strong illustration of the text.

Power of Gentleness. Isaiah i. 18.

S. Anselm was a monk in the Abbey of Bec, in Normandy; and upon Lanfranc's removal became his successor as director. No teacher ever threw a greater spirit of love into his toil. 'Force your scholars to improve!' he burst out to another teacher who relied on blows and compulsion. 'Did you ever see a craftsman fashion a fair image out of a golden plate by blows alone? Does he not now gently press it and strike it with his tools; now with wise art, yet more gently raise and shape it? What do your scholars turn into under this ceaseless beating?' 'They turn only brutal,' was the reply. 'You have bad luck,' was the keen answer, 'in a training that only turns men into beasts.' The worst natures softened before this tenderness and patience. Even the Conqueror, so harsh and terrible to others, became another man, gracious and easy of speech, with Anselm.

Sin and Purity. Isaiah i. 25.

'Yet Thou my shield and glory art,
Th' uplifter of mine head.
I cry'd, and, from His holy hill,
The Lord me answer made.

I laid me down and slept, I waked;
For God sustained me.
I will not fear though thousands ten
Set round against me be.'

This was the text from which Bishop Bedell preached to his fellow-prisoners in the time of the Irish rebellion in 1642, when

he and the Protestants of the district were shut up in hold, and in danger of death at any moment. He was one of the best bishops who ever lived in Ireland, and had his example been more general the Reformation would have made much greater progress in the country. He learned the Irish language, had the Bible translated into it, was assiduous in Christian work, and was filled with the spirit of meekness and self-sacrifice. So much did he commend himself that, when he died in the midst of these troubles, the Irish did him uncommon honour at his burial, fired a volley at his interment, and cried *Requiescat in pace ultimus Anglorum.* He lived from 1570 to 1642. He had a deep feeling of sin, and as the word *Bedel* in Hebrew signifies *tin*, he took for his motto Isaiah i. 25, 'I will purely purge thy dross and take away all thy (*bedel*) tin.'

War. Isaiah ii. 4. WHEN General Grant visited England, the Duke of Cambridge offered him a review in his honour; but he declined the courtesy. He declared to his friends that the last thing he desired to see was a military display. He had seen soldiers enough, he said, to last him a lifetime.

'THE next morning—after the battle of Gaine's Mill—General Reynolds was brought in as a prisoner. He had been my messmate in the old army for more than a year, and for half that time my tent-mate. Not an unkind word had ever passed between us. He now seemed confused and mortified at his position. He sat down and covered his face with his hands, and at length said, "Hill, we ought not to be enemies." I told him that there would be no bad feeling on my part, and that the fortunes of war were notoriously fickle.'—*General Hill.*

'I REGARDED it as humane to consume everything that could be used to support or supply armies. Protection was continued over such supplies as were within lines held by us, and which we expected to continue to hold. But such supplies within the reach of Confederate armies I regarded as much contraband as arms or ordnance stores. I continued this policy to the close of the war.'—*General Grant.*

Humility. Isaiah ii. 11. A MINISTER named Mr. Winstanley was the means of comforting and edifying the great Dr. Johnson on his deathbed. In a letter to a friend, Hannah More, alluding to this, says: 'I cannot conclude without remarking what honour God has hereby put upon the doctrine of faith in a crucified Saviour. The man whose intellectual powers had awed all around him, was in

his turn made to tremble when the period arrived at which all knowledge appears useless, and vanishes away, except the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Effectually to attain this knowledge, this giant in literature must become a little child. The man looked up to as a prodigy of wisdom must become a fool that he might be wise.'

What a comment is this upon that word: 'The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day!'

Advent Thoughts. It is the peculiar computation of the Church to begin her years, and to revive the annual course of her services, with this time of Advent. For she neither follows the sun nor moon, to number her days and measure her seasons according to their revolution; but Jesus Christ being to her as the only Sun and Light whereby she is guided, following His course alone, she begins, and counts on her year with Him. When this Sun of Righteousness, therefore, doth arise—that is, when His coming and incarnation are first propounded to us—then begins the year of the Church, and from thence are all her other days and times computed.—*Hook.*

John Baptist, the great Advent preacher:

1. *The Birth of John Baptist.* 'And thou, child' (S. Luke i. 76).
2. *The Ministry of John Baptist.* 'What shall we do?' (S. Luke iii. 11, etc.)
3. *The Stumble of John Baptist.* 'Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me' (S. Luke vii. 23).

John Baptist knew nothing of the Second Advent. Hence his stumble.

4. *The Greatness and the Littleness of John Baptist.* 'There hath not risen a greater . . . He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater' (S. Luke vii. 28.)—*Godet.*

'As it was in the days of Noah and Lot (Luke xvii. 26, etc.), they ate, they drank, they married and were given in marriage.' Thus Jesus does not once upbraid them with the scandalous crimes which they committed, but with that very thing in their way of life which was commendable, but which becomes hideous when nothing higher can be told of an age; when its whole life is a worldly life, in which God is no longer taken into account. A great increase of outward power and culture, reliance on science, industry, the conquest of the external world, lead to an arrogance that no longer admits its dependence on God.—*Lange.*

ADVENT SUNDAY

The Lord's Coming.
1 Thess. v. 16.

Not a mere amelioration, gradual or sudden, of the condition of the Church or the world; not a mere displacement of evil and triumph of good; not a mere crisis of human affairs, issuing in times of universal blessing and happiness; it shall be a *personal coming.*—*Vaughan.*

Christ's Coming.
Rev. xxii. 20.

A dialogue most sublime and brief. Notice—

1. The certainty that *Jesus will return*: '*Surely I come.*'
2. The certainty that He will come *quickly*. 'Surely I come *quickly*.'
3. The certainty that we cannot welcome Him then, by responding as S. John did, '*Yea, come, Lord Jesus*,' except upon certain conditions:—

(i.) We must first *come* to Jesus, before we can desire *His coming*; *i.e.* we must accept the Gospel invitation, '*Come.*'

(ii.) We must be at peace with Him.

(iii.) We must be in sympathy with Him and His work.—*Lange.*

In the first ages it would have been deemed a kind of apostasy not to have sighed after the day of the Lord.—*Massillon.*

In the first Advent God veiled His Divinity in flesh to prove the faithful; in the second Advent He will manifest His glory to reward their faith (S. Matthew xix. 28; S. Luke ix. 26).

Christ has four Advents—His Advent in the flesh; His Advent in the soul of man; His Advent at man's death; His Advent at the last day.

You ask Him to come whose advent you dread; reform, or else do not pray, against your own wish, 'Thy kingdom come' (S. Matthew vi. 10).

Watchfulness.

A wise and prudent traveller keeps watch over his steps, and ever has his eyes upon the road immediately before him: but he does not perpetually look back upon his past steps: in so doing he would hinder his progress.

The Judgment Day.

Conscience will accuse us. 'I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done' (Psalm L. 21). How are these things to be set before us? Must we not realise to ourselves that that setting before us will be in one moment brought to pass in the secret recesses of our hearts? There so burnt in—if that, which God forbid, should nevertheless happen—that it

can never be erased: that if in the moment of that terrible judgment we stand acquitted, yet nevertheless remembered for ever, as the most tremendous contest between mercy and judgment, the most terrible equipoise between life and death.—*S. Thomas de Villanova.*

Watching for Advent. PSALM CXXX. 6.

THERE are risings of clouds and returns of the light of God's favour to souls, which, in this chequered world, make the days of the believer's life. Perhaps the nearest thing we have on earth to the Second Advent are those drawings near and those clear manifestations of Christ, here and there, bright and wonderful! which come to His people's hearts. The believer learns, as he goes on, to take them almost as parts and pledges of the breaking of 'the morning of the resurrection.'—*J. Vaughan.*

Advent Preparation. ISAIAH XXV. 9.

SOME of us may remember in the old days, when railroads were as yet unknown, or only partially in use, the sort of approach which the traveller used to make to an old continental town. His road lay along a straight, broad, highly raised causeway, fringed on either side by tall poplar trees planted at equal distances from each other. He had to drive, perhaps, some three or four miles through this avenue, and at the further extremity he could from the first perceive the spires or turrets of the place at which he would halt. If there was a variety in the persons he met, and in the objects which he could just make out between or beyond the trees, there was persistent monotony in his general purpose, and consequently in the direction of his thought. From the moment that he enters the avenue he is thinking of his arrival at the other end of it—of what he will see, and say, and do when he dismounts—of the quarters, the welcome, the persons, the objects of interest which there await him. All else that he sees is preparatory and subordinate to that final moment which is, for the present, the limit of his efforts and his expectations. This may suggest the purpose of a long preparatory season which leads us up week by week, with much variety of incidental suggestion, with steady unity of general aim, to a great festival of the Church. Advent is the long straight avenue which has the Christmas festival in view.—*H. P. Liddon.*

Judgment deferred.

IT is the fault of a great many, if God bear with them in their sins, they think He countenances them; if they be not presently stricken dead with Uzzah, they go on; when they smart not, they believe not, and He is not feared till felt (2 Samuel vi. 7).—*Bishop Henshaw.*

Second Sunday in Advent

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISTLE	ROM. XV. 4-13.
GOSPEL	ST. LUKE XXI. 25-33.
FIRST MORNING LESSON	ISA. V.
FIRST EVENING LESSON	ISA. XI. 1-11, OR ISA. XXIV.
SECOND LESSONS . . .	ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMON

Waiting for the Day-Dawn.

Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. 2 PETER i. 19.

IFE in this world can never be more than twilight. It may be broad day—if you put it in contrast with some thicker night which went before. But if you compare it with what is coming, it is only, at the best, a dim 'dawn.'

The danger is—that we think we have day, when we have only twilight.

The best, the most learned, the most enlightened man that ever lived, was only just at 'the daybreak' of the blaze of the goodness, and the knowledge, and the truth, which lay sleeping under his horizon.

Thus the Old Testament—compared to heathendom—was light, clear light. They knew God, and holiness, and immortality. But we, looking back upon it now, see it dark and shadowy. To us it is twilight.

And even there, the Psalms and the Prophets had risen far higher than Moses, even as Moses had risen higher than the antediluvians.

But the New Testament puts the Old to darkness. The day is begun. The shrouded Christ is visible to us. We feel Him; we know Him; we can realise Him. The way of salvation is open.

COMPLETE SERMON

And yet—by the side of what is coming—when the presence of the Person of Christ shall be actually here, and all 'shadows shall flee away,' and there shall be no more darkness—the Gospel itself is darkling. We have only the twilight of Jesus.

In every darkness of our world, there hath always been something to guide the thoughts to the coming twilight; and then, in the twilight, to guide the thoughts to the coming day.

Even ignorance had its scintillations—as in Plato or Zoroaster. Judaism its types, and sacrifices, and inspiration: gleams, beautiful gleams of a better day! And we have distincter teachings; promises more marked: the great Gospel facts: a real, though invisible Presence.

In the Old Testament, and still more in the New, God thus gives us reflected rays,—rays of what is coming. This is S. Peter's reasoning. He says that some of us have the transfiguration, but all of us 'have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light,'—the word means 'lamp,' a 'lamp' that may be carried in the dark, as David calls the Bible;—'take heed, as unto a lamp that shineth into a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.'

Thus, you see, there are always Advents. Twilight is an Advent to the darkness, and the day is an Advent to the twilight. It is a series of comings. More light; more joy; always coming.

This is God's government: knowledge, but knowledge in mystery; and, as soon as one mystery is solved, another mystery rises. Darkness, but with beams in the darkness. Clouds, but with light shining upon the clouds. Something very good now, but something better near. Heaven always at the door. New joys, and new beauties, rising.

So man is kept always in the attitude of preparation; always humble; always expectant. And hope (what is hope? faith made glad): hope is ever in exercise; and so we are trained, step by step, for higher and higher and higher life. And this is happiness.

What is happiness? A happy to-day with a happier to-morrow. It could not be happiness—if it were not happiness now, and if there were not to be a happier to-morrow. A happy to-day and a happier to-morrow!

And so God is confessed in His inscrutableness, and glorified in His love.

You will find that the same principle—on a smaller scale—is being carried out continually in your daily life. There is a waiting-time before a burst; a glimmer in the dark; a thin streak; a few scattered rays; a break; a morning; a noon.

Now see how it stands with our knowledge. There is just enough

known to show us that there is more to be known. We see no whole orb of truth yet. We compass a little, and we guess the rest.

What doctrine can we thoroughly and absolutely grasp? What promise—what verse in the Bible—have you ever fathomed? We are only standing on the margin of the darkness, and waiting for daylight.

But it will come. It will come to all who really look for it.

What shall we do then? Be very modest. Speak and think diffidently, cautiously, reverently—as a man conscious of darkness within him, and all around him.

We are only groping after substances. The whole heaven is to be lighted up presently! And then we shall wonder, and almost smile at all our mistakes, and all our rashnesses.

Meanwhile, we do not know enough for controversy.

But let the eye follow the opening.

If it be a text, and you cannot understand it,—an apparent contradiction, and you cannot reconcile it,—a deep thing, and you cannot receive it,—stand by a little. Leave it a while. Look for further revelation. Keep on your knees—earnest, expectant, watchful.

Look out for signals—for an Advent of more light. It will come. Perhaps very gradually, perhaps suddenly; taking you by surprise; but it will come. God will show it *to those who 'watch for the morning!'*

Only keep, and give heed to what you have, till the complete illumination, 'until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.'

Or, I will suppose that you have been in prayer; and there is no answer: and you have no token that you are heard. *You are heard*, and you have a token. You have the token that the Syro-Phœnician woman had,—that you have grace given you to go on praying.

But you have not light yet to see the token. You are in the twilight of prayer.

Hold on. Keep your eye steadily on the horizon of the promises, holding firm faith with the Unseen. God is only practising your patience, and keeping the blessing back to increase it,—killing the means before He gives the end,—that the means may be nothing, and God only may be glorified.

The answer—in some form or other—is on its way. It will break upon you soon. Only be content to let God do His own work in His own way, tarrying His leisure,—'until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your heart.'

Or, you have a grief, a heavy grief; and it so wraps you round, that you have strained, and strained, and you can trace no speck of comfort, or one spot of alleviation in all the circumference of that great black trial.

Only believe. There is a morning to that night; and that morning has its ordained moments, surer than the laws of nature. And when it comes, then, as the mists of the morning are absorbed into the warmth of the sunrise, so will all that grief lose itself in the joys that God hath prepared for you. He can and He will—(He knows what that poor dark soul wants)—adjust the length of the necessary discipline to the comfort that will be required afterwards.

'Am I forgiven? I seek it; above everything else in the world I seek it. God knows that I would give everything to hear Him say to me, "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven." But I do not feel it; I hear no sound. And could it be, and I not know it?'

It is there. It is to your hand; but the light, the only light that can show it, has not yet broken upon you. Christ must not only give the pardon, He must reveal it. And sometimes there is an interval between that gift and that revelation.

You know how sometimes, when you have walked in the dark, you have thought about the objects around you, till the first break of the morning has shown you what foolish mistakes you made.

You know how the coldest and the blackest hour of the night is just the hour that precedes the sunrise.

So it is with your pardon. The pardon is on its road; the peace is close. Only believe, and look up, 'until' that 'day' of the smile of your Father's face 'dawn' on you, and 'the day-star' of His felt love 'arise in your heart.'

But all these things—waited for, and longed for, and coming, one after another, so faithfully in their time, they are only the emblems and the earnests of that great Advent which is approaching, and approaching rapidly.

I do not say it will be soon here—Christ does not say that. He says, 'I travel rapidly on my road to it'; and the expedition marks His pleasure in it, and His strong desire for it; but He only says, 'I come quickly.' 'I am travelling quickly.'

And when He comes, S. Peter's words—if we are to take them literally—lead us to expeet that even the Advent will be developed gradually.

To the wicked, to the world, it is to be quite sudden. They will not have studied, and believed, or even seen the harbingers. On them it will come 'like a thief in the night'!

But it will not come upon us as a thief in the night.

Therefore to the Church it may be as the text has it, a 'dawn,' and then 'a day-star,' and then a full meridian splendour.

Like the First Advent—'One angel'; and then—'hosts of angels.'

There will be signs. Elias may come. Great things may be on the earth;—universal knowledge;—the Jews' return;—the 'Dawn';—

and then 'the Bright and Morning Star';—and then floods of majesty, and power, and love, and holiness, and joy, and glory!

However this may be, all that is now, the ignorance, and the discipline, and the sorrow, and the sin, and the long ordeal, and all the world's show and pageant—they have all their boundary. 'Occupy'—but—'till I come!' '*till I come!*'

Now, things all shade off, almost imperceptibly:—misery into happiness; total darkness into perfect light.

It will not be shaded then. It will be a definite line. It will be Christ, or no Christ; eternal night, or perpetual day.

All the rest is only 'until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.'

Do you wish to know what that Advent will be to you?

There is a solution in my text. When that day 'dawns,' will 'the Day-star' find place—(has He a place now?) prepared in you? Is He loved? Will He be welcome? Has He a reflection there? Has He a home? Will He—as one already there (only too hidden hitherto)—as one already there—will He 'arise in your heart?'

J. VAUGHAN.

From the *Brighton Pulpit.*

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Inspiration of the Old Testament.

For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. ROMANS xv. 3, 4.

LET us consider some few of the truths which this statement of the Apostle seems to imply.

I. It implies, first of all, at the very least, the trustworthiness of the Old Testament—I say its trustworthiness; I do not for the moment go so far as to say its inspiration. Unless a book, or a man, be trustworthy, it is impossible to feel confidence in it or in him, and confidence in an instructor is the very first condition of receiving instruction to any good purpose. Now, if this be so, it shows that the Apostle would have had nothing to do with any estimate of the books of the Old Testament which is fatal to belief in their trustworthiness. We may have noticed, perhaps, that when estimates of this kind are put forward, as is occasionally the case, they are commonly prefaced by

the observation that the Christian Church has never defined what inspiration is, and it is left to be inferred that a book may still be in some singular sense inspired, although the statements which it contains are held by the critic to be opposed to the truth of history or to the truth of morals. It is no doubt true that no authoritative definition of what the inspiration of Holy Scripture is, of what it does and does not permit or imply, has ever been propounded by the Church of Christ, just as she has propounded no definition of the manner and effect of the action of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.' Our Lord's words apply to an inspired book not less than to a sanctified soul, but at the same time, both in the case of the soul and of the book, we can see that there are certain things which are inconsistent with the action of the Holy Spirit. Just as wilful sin is incompatible with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the soul, so inveracity is incompatible with the claim of a book to have been inspired by the Author of all truth.

II. The Apostle's statement implies, next, that the Jewish Scriptures have a world-wide and an enduring value. They were written, he says, for our instruction—that is, for the instruction of the Apostolic Church, which confidently aspired to embrace the world. They were written, then, for human beings generally, in all places, at all times. Could such a statement be made about any other national literature, ancient or modern? Some instruction, no doubt, is to be gathered from the literature of every people. The products of the human mind in all its phases, and in circumstances the most unpromising, have generally something to tell us; but, on the other hand, there is a great deal in the very finest uninspired literature that cannot be described as permanently or universally instructive; much in that of ancient Greece, much in that of our own country. And, therefore, when the Apostle says of a great collection of books, of various characters, various dates, and on various subjects, embodying the legislation, the history, the poetry, the morals, of a small Eastern people, that whatsoever was contained in them had been set down for the instruction of men of another, and a wider, faith, living in a later age, and, by implication, for the instruction of all human beings, this is certainly, when we think of it, an astonishing assertion.

Clearly, if the Apostle is to be believed, these books cannot be like any other similar collection of national laws, records, poems, proverbs. There must be in them some quality or qualities which warrant this lofty estimate. And here we may observe that as books rise in the scale of excellence, whatever their authorship or their

outward form, they tend towards exhibiting a permanence and universality of interest.

Could any merely human author have stood the test that the Old Testament has stood? Think what it has been to the Jewish people through the tragic vicissitudes of their wonderful history; think what it has been to Christendom. For nineteen centuries it has formed the larger part of the religious handbook of the Church of Christ. It has shaped Christian hopes, it has largely governed Christian legislation, it has supplied the language for Christian prayer and praise. The noblest, the saintliest souls in Christendom, have one after another fed their souls on it, or even on little fragments of it, taking a verse, and shutting the spiritual ear to everything else, and, in virtue of the concentrated intensity with which they have thus sought for days and weeks, and months, and years, to penetrate the inmost secrets of that one fragment of its consecrated language, rising even to heroic heights of efforts and of endurance. Throughout the Christian centuries the Old Testament has been a mine constantly worked, and is far to-day from being exhausted. Well might the old poet cry: 'I am as glad of Thy Word as one that findeth great spoils; the law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom to the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.'

III. A second or deeper sense of Scripture constantly underlies the primary, literal, superficial sense. That a narrative should have two senses, one which it suggests to the reader at first sight, and another which is deeper, but which is only discovered on reflection, may at first sight strike us as strange, but Scripture itself tells us that this is the case. Nobody, of course, would expect to find a second sense in an uninspired book, however well written. In Lord Macaulay's *History of England*, for instance, we read what he has to say about the events which he describes, and there is an end of it; but this is not true of the Old Testament Scriptures. If we go, as Christians surely should go, to the New Testament in order to discover how we should read the Old, we find ourselves constantly guided to search for a second spiritual sense which underlies the letter.

The necessity of recognising some such sense in the Book has been almost universally admitted by Christian interpreters, and those modern schools or groups of scholars who have rejected it have generally ended by abandoning, more or less decisively, the teaching value of the Book altogether. Indeed, the neglect of this secondary

and spiritual sense of Scripture has sometimes led Christians to misapply the Old Testament very seriously. Thus, for instance, both the soldiers of Raymond of Toulouse, who made war on the Albigenses in the thirteenth century, and the Puritans, who made war on the Church in the seventeenth century, appealed to the early wars of the Israelites as a sanction even for indiscriminate slaughter. They forgot that the promulgation of the law of charity by our Lord had made such an appeal impossible for Christians, they forgot that most instructive scene outside the Samaritan village which had refused Him a welcome, and on which two of His first followers would fain have had Him call down fire from heaven, and His significant rebuke, 'Ye know not what spirit ye are of.' Dwelling on the letter of the narrative of the Book of Joshua, they missed its true and lasting, but deeper import—the eternal witness which it bears to God's hatred of moral evil, even though veiled beneath a comparatively advanced material civilisation, and the duty of making war—incessant, implacable, exterminating war upon those passions which too easily wreck their Jericho or their Ai within the Christian soul itself, and are only conquered by resolute perseverance and courage.

And this second sense of Scripture is especially instructive as a guide to the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the end, as of the law, so of the whole of the Old Testament, to every one that believeth. No doubt the literal sense of the Old Testament often points to Him. Psalms like the 22nd or the 110th, prophecies such as Isaiah's of the virgin-birth and of the Man of Sorrows, can properly be referred to no one else; but there is much which has a primary reference to some saint, or hero, or event of the day, which yet in its deeper significance points on to Him; and this depends, not on any arbitrary or fanciful feeling, but on the principle that He is the recapitulation, as an early Christian writer expressed it, the recapitulation of all that is exalted in humanity—that all that is true, heroic, saintly, pathetic, and that we see elsewhere only in fragments, meets in Him as the perfect Representative of the race.

Only when this is understood do we read the Old Testament with Christian eyes, read it as the first Christians were wont to read it; only then do we understand the full meaning and purpose of much which else is veiled from our sight of those great deliverances from Egypt and from Babylon—the foreshadowing of a greater deliverance beyond—all those elaborate rites of purification and sacrifice, which have no meaning apart from the one Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, all that succession of saints and heroes who, with all their imperfections, point onwards and upwards to One who dignifies

their feebler and broken lives by making them in not a few respects anticipations of His glorious self; only then do we understand the truth of that profound saying of the great Augustine, that 'as the Old Testament is patent in the New, so the New Testament is latent in the Old.'

H. P. LIDDON,
British Weekly Pulpit, vol. ii. p. 393.

The Scriptures bearing Witness.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. ROMANS XV. 4.

THE Holy Scriptures have been always made by the Church the subject of this Sunday. In the Epistle they are spoken of as already fulfilled; in the Gospel, which our Church has appointed, as now waiting their last accomplishment. The Epistle speaks of Christ as revealed to all nations; the Gospel as yet to be manifested in great power from Heaven. The things of which the Epistle speaks were once matters of prophecy, now matters of history; they were once merely in the written Word, and subjects of faith, but now of sight throughout the world. That which the Gospel describes is still matter of prophecy received by faith, not by sight. Yet not altogether thus; for the Gentiles are not yet fully called in as the Epistle describes, and the signs of which the Gospel speaks are even now some of them fulfilled. Thus things which have been, and things that are, and things yet to be, are by Holy Scripture interwoven together, and form that 'threefold cord' which 'is not quickly broken.' When we read the Epistle, we look behind and see what has been fulfilled and is fulfilling in us; in reading the Gospel we look before, and wait for what is yet to be.

I. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime,' says S. Paul, 'were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.' He is speaking of things in the Old Testament respecting Christ; they are there written, he says, that we may dwell and ponder on the same, as seeing how they have been fulfilled in Him; and so being supported and comforted by them may have hope.

The Holy Scriptures would have been as a sealed Book were it not for Christ, who bears the keys of David. 'The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the Book, and to loose the seals thereof.'[1] For now, the Holy Spirit enlightening our hearts, we are able therein to discern Christ throughout; we take hold of Him by faith, and will not let Him go, saying, 'I have found

[1] Rev. v. 5.

Him Whom my soul loveth'; 'My beloved is mine, and I am His.'[1] So the good Spirit whispered in the Old Testament to the secret heart of the penitent; and so did He speak aloud to S. Paul, filling all his life, as it were, and his soul with this heavenly music, with which he laboured so earnestly to fill the minds of others. All of which he here sums up in these words, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' 'The God of hope,' as before 'the God of patience and consolation'; this is a wonderful expression; how full of sweetness; what a tower of strength is there in the very word! If our God is the 'God of hope,' who shall despair? if our God is 'the God of patience,' who shall not endure? And thus does the Epistle end as it begins with hope, as resting on the Scriptures, as strengthened by the fulfilment of them, as imparted by the God of all hope; and this hope is that 'blessed hope' of seeing Christ soon return, and of being accepted in Him.

II. And surely such hope we need, and all the strength with which the Scriptures and the God of all consolation can afford to support us, when, from looking back to what has already been fulfilled, we turn our eyes and look forward to those fearful things of which the Gospel for to-day speaks, and the coming on of which we may now expect.

It was a few days before our Lord's death, when He was walking up the Mount of Olives, after teaching in the Temple for the last time, that he turned and looked on Jerusalem, and then sitting down there with four of His disciples, He spoke to them of its fall, and of the great end of all things, and His own return to judgment.

'And there shall be signs,' says our Lord, as S. Luke gives the account, 'in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken.' Now what is signified by this description of the terrible signs which will mark the approach of the Great Day? Holy Scripture always, even unto the end, speaks of the sun, moon, and stars, the earth and the sea, thus shaking and being changed at its coming. But are these expressions to be understood literally? or are they intended as a figurative mode of describing something equally terrible of another kind? For it might be said that the first coming of Christ was represented by figures, such as mountains being made low, valleys exalted, and crooked ways being made straight; which signified the proud being humbled, the poor being raised up, and unrighteous dealings being corrected; so it might be said that

[1] Song of Sol. ii. 16, iii. 4.

the Sun might signify Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, which is hidden from the world, from faith failing, and that the moon is the Church which shines by His Light; and the stars falling might well signify good men or Churches being let fall from Christ's hand to the ground. Now it is not for us to decide in what way these prophecies will be fulfilled, we must wait and abide the time; when the time is come good men will see and understand. It may be that these things will take place literally; or it may be not literally, but spiritually: or it may be in both ways. But of this we are assured from many passages throughout the Scriptures, that there will be a time unlike anything which yet has been; 'the great tribulation,' as it is called; the great trial of men. *After* which these things will be close to the very words and literal meaning of Scripture until time shall throw light upon them, and God shall enable us to interpret the writing.

'And then,' it is added, that is, in the midst of these fearful commotions, 'then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.' When charity has grown cold, when faith is failing, when Christ seems to have deserted His Church and His faithful few, then shall He be suddenly seen in full manifestation. This is always our comfort and strength in a thousand lesser matters; that when things appear at the worst God is wont to intervene; and not only this, but they who in earnest faith and prayer look to Him in their trials are sure to find some tokens of His presence, so that they know they are not deserted, but feel assured that He will again appear as the Sun coming forth from behind the clouds.

I. WILLIAMS,
The Epistles and Gospels, vol. i. p. 4.

The Uses of the Bible.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. ROMANS XV. 4.

I. TO instruct us. In spiritual learning, the whole is useful in this respect. It is useful to all. Instruction in religious truth, by the whole book, to all classes of readers, in all ages.

II. To animate us with hope. Expectation of future good. Chiefly spiritual. Partly here, partly hereafter.

III. To cheer us in affliction. We are sufferers. The Bible is written for a race of sufferers. The value of much of that is never discerned except in seasons of affliction. Then it produces patience, submission to the will of God. Then it administers comfort, strength, support, peace.

G. BROOKS,
Five Hundred Outlines, p. 204.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

Peace in Believing.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. ROMANS XV. 13.

PEACE is the entire harmony between the nature of anything and its circumstances. That is what every healthy aspiration after peace is really seeking for. Whether it be high in its sphere or low, whether it be the star moving calmly in its orbit, or the seed silently wedding itself to the rich ground in which it is buried, or whether it be the labourer at his plough or the statesman in the capitol, wherever there is a nature in harmony with its surroundings, so that they call out all its best activities and at the same time it is able to answer all their demands, there is Peace. We talk about the 'Peace of God.' Is not this really the conception which, carried to its highest, reaches that sublime idea? 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' said Jesus. It is no Oriental apathy. The Christian thought of God is full of interest, zeal, emotion, action, only it is always perfectly balanced with its surroundings, since its surroundings are the utterance and creation of itself. God and the universe in their unbroken harmony. The universe never asking anything of God which God cannot do. God having no power or affection which the universe cannot utter. That is the Perfect Peace.

I. Let us count this, then, our definition of Peace. It is harmonious relation with our surroundings, and evidently, then, Peace will become a deeper and deeper word, a deeper and deeper thing to men as they become aware more and more of what their surroundings are, as they open their eyes to more and more intimate and sacred things with which they have to do. And so the opposite of Peace, namely, disquiet, unrest, will also become more and more real to a man as he comes to the knowledge of his circumstances, of the beings and powers which surround his life with which he ought to be in harmony, but which he is either ignoring altogether, or to which he is relating himself wrongly. There is one, and only one, conception of the world in which a man necessarily assumes a right attitude and relationship to his fellow-men. It is that conception which thinks of the whole world as God's family. The instant that that idea is presented and comprehended, peace looms up in the distance as a possibility. Just as fast and just as far as that idea is realised in a man's own life, he comes to be at peace—a high, pure, intelligent peace—with his fellow-men; not the peace of compromise nor of armed defiance, but the peace of clearly understood relationships and mutual love and mutual help.

II. The next step takes us to ourselves. It is only the most super-

ficial people that recognise merely their relations of peace or discord with the external world, and never ask whether they are at peace with themselves. To be at peace with a man's own self! We use the phrase; we think we understand it. There are certain comfortable and satisfied conditions in which we think we have attained the thing. But we do not really understand it till we have got this fundamental idea of what peace is,—the harmony of a being with its surroundings. To be at peace with ourselves is not to loosely approve ourselves in what we are. It is to work with ourselves, that we may be all that God made us for.

Evidently it is a great deal deeper discord when a man is not at peace with himself than when he is not at peace with his brethren. But there is something deeper, something nearer to us, even than our brethren or ourselves. And that is God. The will of God, which is the law of holiness, is the deepest and inmost thing of all this world. And the ultimate question of every human life is, whether he is at peace with God. Once more remember what peace is. It is the being rightly and harmoniously related with that with which we have to do. Now, the only right relation of man to the will of God is loving obedience, affectionate and happy loyalty. Are you at peace with God? The question comes to some man living his ordinary worldly life, and he looks up and answers, 'Yes; I pay Him reverence; I never blaspheme His name; sometimes I try to pray to Him a little, and I hope that He will take care of me when I die. Surely I am at peace with Him.' But are you really, if peace means nothing less than the existence between your life and His of all the relations and affections which ought to be between the infinite Father and His child? Are you really at peace with Him, if peace means loving loyalty?

III. And now, with this conception of Peace clearly before us, let us go on to what is always the next question. How can this condition, so precious in itself, be won? And one answer immediately suggests itself, which I think we shall find to fall in with S. Paul's verse which is our text. The broadest statement of S. Paul's utterance here is this: that everything lives its full life and does its full work, or, in other words, completes that condition of absolutely perfect relationships which we saw was what Peace meant, only as it lives and works within the compass of something greater than itself, which holds each part into its place, and to which each part must be loyal, obedient, and true.

Think of that great idea of Peace by Envelopment. It has no end or limit until we come to God. The prerogative, the distinction of the Divine life is this, that it, and it alone, is self-enveloping. There is nothing beyond it. It is held within nothing. It holds all things

within itself. There is nothing to which God is bound to be true but God.

And now, what shall we call this law,—the law that every power comes to its best and most harmonious action only within a larger envelopment to which it trusts itself and to which it is loyal. This faithfulness to an enveloping principle and power—what is it really but belief? The child believes in its father. The life believes in its idea. The law believes in its principle. Everything lives and works by believing in something larger than itself, until you come to God. God believes in Himself. With Him alone, in all the universe, is self-belief, the condition of the highest life. And so the truth which I have been trying to state, a truth which in some form or other breaks out everywhere through all the world, is really, as you see, the truth which is wrapt up in S. Paul's phrase,—'Peace in Believing.'

Peace comes by belief; not by ourselves or our own strength, but by being held in the hand of Him who saved us, do these disturbed natures of ours come to their true selves and work harmoniously and to their best results. Doubt finds its only rest in personal confidence. Self-conceit, which is the most peace-destroying thing in all the world, is overwhelmed in consecration to the Master, and contrition starts from the dust, and turns into the very angel of hope and growth when once a soul believes in Jesus Christ.

PHILLIPS BROOKS,
The Mystery of Iniquity, p. 187.

The God of Hope

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. ROMANS XV. 13.

I. THE designation under which God is here addressed. There is commonly a correspondence between the title by which God is designated and the blessings which are asked of Him. Here hope is asked, and He is called the God of hope.

(1) It is He who has provided the atonement, which is the ground of our hope.

(2) It is He who has given the promises, which are the warrant of our hope.

(3) It is He who confers the grace of hope.

II. The blessings which are here implored from God. (1) Faith; (2) Joy; (3) Peace.

III. The end for which these blessings are implored. (1) The hope of faith. In believing. (2) The hope of experience. Peace and joy.

IV. The Agent in the whole process.

None but the Holy Spirit can produce these graces. The Holy Spirit actually produces them all.

G. BROOKS,
Five Hundred Outlines, p. 290.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

Our Nearness to the Great Day of the Lord.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. LUKE xxi. 25, 26.

There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 2 PETER iii. 3, 4.

THIS prophecy of S. Peter's has, since his time, received abundant fulfilment, and is being abundantly fulfilled even to the present hour. The thought which it announces with reference to the promised coming of our Saviour to judgment is exactly that which we should have impressed on every side if most Christians of our own day would let their hearts speak freely on this subject. On no other point, indeed, is unbelief so wide spread; and where actual unbelief is not found, there is at least wanting a living faith in the *nearness* of our Lord's advent,—the fresh living consciousness of the day of the Lord.

Let us consider—*How near we all are to the great day of the Lord.* We shall try—1st, to make the truth of this position clear; and, 2nd, to explain *how* we may become familiar with it, and keep hold of it.

I. We may, then, on the ground of the Gospel for this day and the Word of God in general, maintain that we are all very near to the great day of the Lord. And not we only, and our contemporaries, we may add, but all men, without exception, be they dead or yet unborn, *have been*, while they lived, very near this day, or *will be*, as soon as they perceive the light of this world. This position falls, as you see, into two subordinate parts: 1st, *There is still a day of the Lord to come.* 2nd, *We are all very near to that day.*

1. *There is still a day of the Lord to come.* What does this mean? 'The Lord Jesus is coming again.' This is the loud cry of the Gospel. He who refuses to hear it from the lips of the Lord and

His Apostles, let him hear it from the mouth of the angel. This cry is like a fiery dart cast into the conscience of mankind.

This barb in the conscience renders the natural power of conscience again living and powerful, which would otherwise remain till the end of life almost buried beneath the cares and restlessness of the earthly mind; the great truth, there is yet a day coming, which is the day of days, which will bring everything to light, even the hidden things of the heart and the secrets of the conscience, which will decide fully and for ever all things, even thy eternal destiny. This fact which, even as a conjecture, darts like an electric shock through the heart, —'*The Lord Jesus will come again*,'—is expressly declared in the clear Word of God.

2. *To this day of the Lord we are all very near.* This is the plain doctrine of Scripture. The Apostles universally look upon the second coming of the Lord as very near, as if they themselves might live to see it, and enjoin on the faithful the same thought, and the consequent steadfast waiting for that day, which might come upon them suddenly, as a thief in the night. The Apostles write in plain terms. '*The end* of all *things* is *at hand*' (1 Peter iv. 7). 'The coming of the Lord draweth nigh' (S. James v. 8). 'Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry' (Heb. x. 37). 'Little children, it is the last time' (1 John ii. 18). Indeed, they speak of this matter sometimes in the present tense—'He comes' (Rev. i. 7), not 'He *will* come'; which means nothing else than that *He* is incessantly comprehended in the coming, the drawing near, and the consummation of all those earthly events which must first come to pass, and that we should greatly err if we indulged the thought that there will be any unnecessary halting or delay, any tardiness in the progress of His onward course.

This doctrine of Holy Scripture, and the temper of mind which it enjoins, seem to stand, however, in decided contradiction to the history of the many centuries since the time of Christ, which seems calculated to shake our belief in the second coming. But this is far from being the case. For the Lord and His Apostles have also seen very clearly that the *historical* nearness of that great day was far from being an *absolute* nearness. On this point the Saviour Himself speaks plainly enough in the chapter from which our text is taken. 'But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified . . . the end is not by and by' (S. Luke xxi. 9). Just as distinctly does S. Paul express himself to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. ii. 1-3, 5).

And still with all their insight into the historical side of this matter, the sacred writers continue urgently to inculcate a constant expectation of the near advent of the Lord. And why? Because this subject has yet another side; because this temper of mind is of

necessity enjoined upon us, from the very conditions of our earthly life, and quite apart from the *historical* nearness or distance of the last day. However distant the day of the Lord may be historically, it is nevertheless very near to every human being, to us all, since our distance from it must be measured, not by the remaining years of this world's duration, but by the remaining years of our individual life.

Thus it is undeniable that the day of the Lord is at the door,—a truth which, if it becomes in us a living, familiar conviction, cannot fail to exercise an effectual influence on our whole moral life and conduct. The question is only by what means can we make this truth become in us a living conviction? And this is the very question which the second part of our discourse has to answer.

II. *How* can we *render* and *keep* this evident truth familiar to our minds?

1. How *render* it familiar to our minds? But are special aids, then, necessary for this purpose? Is not this truth in itself most simple and obvious? Is it not without our co-operation preached to us on every side? All true. But how comes it then that, according to all experience, it is visible and powerful in the hearts of so few?—few even among those who know and acknowledge its substantial import? There must be some hindrance in our hearts which prevents it from becoming a living power.

And this is soon discovered. Like the bare thought of death, it appals the heart, it darkens the whole life. As such, therefore, the heart can naturally never give it willing entrance, except in the hour of death or of despair. But how different when it appears in the light of the Gospel, as the thought of the speedy coming of the beloved Master to release His people, and to usher in the new eternal spring of a new creation, after the long, cold, barren winter of this mortal life. When the doctrine appears thus to a heart it is gladly welcomed, and allowed to become a power within it. Then is it the sweetest consolation in all the troubles of this life, the highest hope, the true helmet of salvation (Eph. vi. 17; 1 Thess. v. 8). Thus speaks the Lord concerning it in our text: 'When these things begin to appear, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh' (ver. 28).

In *this* light, therefore, we must look at the text we are this day considering,—learn to see it in this light only if we would make it familiar to our hearts; in other words, we must learn to love the Saviour and His appearing, while walking in the path of penitence and faith,—for with this we must begin in order to become true Christians.

2. But truly it is of just as much importance that the truth we are insisting upon, when it once becomes familiar to our heart, should be also *kept* familiar. And *how?*

The Saviour replies (ver. 36), 'Through *prayer and watching*.' What does '*to watch*' mean? To keep our individual Christian consciousness clear, undimmed, and lively, so that all we do may be done *from* and *in* that consciousness. And thus the things of earth with which we have to do will not be able to ensnare us. That is what is called '*keeping the heart with all diligence*.'

And to this end we must *pray*. Or rather, we *watch effectually* only by means of prayer,—by means of constant childlike intercourse with God. Without this we soon begin to sleep, or at least to dream. To him, however, to whom the silent heart-prayer in all things has become second nature, the Lord is ever near,—to him His advent is never unexpected. For He who then comes *visibly*, has already come to Him daily and hourly, only *invisibly*.

R. ROTHE,

Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 11.

The Coming of the Son of Man.

And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. S. LUKE xxi. 27.

THE Collect which is said daily throughout Advent reminds us of the two Advents or Comings of Christ—that when He 'came to visit us in great humility,' and that which shall take place at the end of the world. As the First Sunday in Advent directed our thoughts to the Incarnation, the coming of the Son of God in lowliness and meekness, as imaged by His demeanour and surroundings as He entered into Jerusalem before the Passion; so the Second Sunday in Advent leads us to contemplate 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'

I. Let us examine for a moment why it is we find it difficult to grasp the truth of the Second Coming of Christ to judgment. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian Faith, and one not easy of belief, or, at least, of realisation. What is a mystery? It is not something to be relegated to the sphere of poetry. The mysteries are not mere embellishments of Christianity; they form its essence. Neither are they nebulous truths which lend a beauty to the Gospel narrative, like the haze which charms us in Turner's pictures. A mystery is a truth, a part of which is clear and visible, whilst there are regions which stretch out, like the ocean, beyond the ken of man, into boundless space. Such truths are to be found in the sphere of nature as well as in that of grace; but in the one case, they are known by the exercise of the natural faculties, in the other, they are believed on the authority of testimony.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The mystery of the Second Advent, if viewed in itself, is a more difficult article of faith than any of those which concern the events of Christ's Life on earth, and which are commemorated in the Christian Seasons. Perhaps one reason for this is the *futurity* of the mystery. Faith reposes more readily on fact than on promise. Moreover, the imagination finds it hard to depict that of which we have no experience. Of birth and life, of suffering and death, we have fellowship with our Redeemer. The mysteries of the Incarnate life on earth are supernatural truths, but they are like gems enclosed in a natural setting. The mother and her child, the boyhood of Nazareth, the public ministry, the Passion and Resurrection, are encircled with the incidents of natural life; but the Coming to Judgment seems to be an event altogether supernatural and transcendent. The scene is so majestic that our faculties stagger as they strive to realise it. The opening graves, the sea giving up its dead, the whole human race assembling,—not one tenant of the tomb forgotten; the angels, pure and blessed spirits, a myriad host; evil spirits too—for they are 'reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day'—all gathering for 'the great assize'; and, then, above all, the Glory of the Son of Man,—all this forms a picture of an event so stupendous, so awful, so beyond the reach of human experience, that we have great need to make frequent acts of faith in that Mystery which is predicted in the Gospel for to-day.

II. The Church, which is 'the pillar and ground of the truth,' has from the beginning made the Second Advent of Christ to judge the world an essential part of her creed.

There are few truths which are so fully delivered to us in the Word of God as the coming of our Lord to judgment. The vision of 'the Great day' was before the minds of the prophets. 'Enoch,' S. Jude tells us, 'the seventh from Adam, prophesied . . . saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all.' Isaiah points on to the time when those who 'dwell in dust' shall 'awake,' and 'the earth shall cast out the dead.' Daniel foresees the assembled hosts before the throne, and 'the judgment set, and the books opened,' and 'one like the Son of Man' coming 'with the clouds of heaven.' Joel and Malachi foretell 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' From the beginning they look on to the end. From the dawn the inspired eye kindles as it sees, across the hills of time, the track of Christ's glory, the close of this world's day. The ear of the prophet across the chasm of ages catches the sound of His chariot-wheels, and the shout which shall awake the dead.

May we not find in our moral nature another ground for expecting a day of final account? The soul of man is, in the sense in which an

old writer used the words, 'naturally Christian,' in that the truths of Christianity meet its primary needs and affections, its hopes and fears, and supply them with their true objects and satisfactions. 'Man alone is able to be judged, for he, of all living creatures, alone is lord of his own actions.' He has, that is, the power of free-will, and is responsible for what he does or neglects to do. Through the possession of this self-determining power, we are accountable to God for our actions. We have a conscience which tells us when we do right or wrong, a portent of that judgment to come. The voice of conscience certainly implies that we are accountable to One for all we do. The truth that 'every one of us must give an account of himself to God' finds a response, then, in my inmost being. In my conscience I discover an anticipation and prophecy of the mystery which the Church and the Scriptures alike reveal to man —the coming judgment.

W. H. HUTCHINGS,
Sermons for the People, p. 40.

The Soul's Welcome of Christ the Test of its Spiritual Condition.

When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. S. Luke xxi. 28.

I. THE most frightful changes on the earth—wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and in the heavens the darkening of the sun's light, the blotting out of the stars; and in the hearts and hopes of men, universal fear, distress, and perplexity—are to be occasions of joy and hope to Christians. Men of the world, earthly-minded persons, all whose hearts are set upon perishable things, they will of course be cast down and humbled in despair and anguish when they see the desire of their hearts, the delight of their souls, the only blessings which they can understand and care for, taken away from them and perishing for ever.

II. The question is not, whether one should be alarmed or not at the sudden coming of the Lord. It may be that the holiest and best who shall then be alive will be most deeply moved with the remembrance of their own sins and infirmities. But the question is, Were the day now at hand, shall we sorrow as men without hope at the final departure of the good things of this world? We may judge ourselves concerning our own fear of the coming of Christ, or of our own latter end. If it cause us to break off our iniquities, to do right things and leave wrong things undone, it is a wholesome and godly fear, and the longer and more diligently we obey its motion, the

more may we thank God and take courage. Begin at once and put all your strength in the work, that when He shall appear you may look up to Him as a child that hopes for pardon, and not to your portion with them who shall call on the mountains and hills to cover them.

J. KEBLE,

Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve, p. 300.

On the Fortunes of the Church.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. S. LUKE xxi. 28.

THROUGH all varieties of climes, of tongues, of laws, of customs,—through all alternations of barbarism and civilisation,—through all migrations of people, changes of empire, and confusion of the tribes of mankind,—through all these impediments the Church of God has come down to us uninterrupted and triumphant, and uninterrupted and triumphant (our Saviour has informed us) it shall proceed to the end. But as in looking back upon its history we see it often engaged in a desperate conflict, sometimes brought even to death's door, so in looking forward we must expect to find a similar state of things, to see her still militant against the world, and the world still warring upon her; nor are we left to reasonable expectation alone. Our Lord and His Apostles have assured us that such will be her condition, and have even shadowed forth in words of prophecy some of the most important trials which she is still destined to undergo.

I. Perhaps at no period of the world has the face of the Christian Church presented a more interesting appearance than at the present day. A long period of calm and security is past, and a period of most foreboding aspect is coming on. Superstition and infidelity, which combined their powers against her in her infancy, are once again in open league. Wherever we cast our eyes they are met with churches tottering and creeds insulted. But it was amid the fearful signs which proclaimed and accompanied the overthrow of what had been a portion of God's Church, that our blessed Lord bade His disciples to look up, and lift up their heads, for that their redemption drew nigh. May not then the spiritual man derive a similar comfort from similar signs? Certain it is that a careful reader of the history of the Church will find that the ruin of any portion of it has led to the extension of its dominion in other quarters, and with a purer creed.

II. The Church is a society taken out from the slavery of the world, and brought together into the liberty of the Gospel. Did it,

therefore, consist but of perfect members, it were removed beyond all influence of this world for good or for evil; the world would not have a single tie or hold upon them, but all being free in the spirit, would be unassailable by any chance or change affecting the flesh. But its members are all in different stages towards perfection, very many far remote from it.

The Church of God is too strong for the world; she is ever one and the same; her members are united by an unvarying, undying principle, which is faith in the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus. But worldly society is never in one stay, it has no abiding principle to keep it together, day by day it is changing manners, morals, and institutions. What wonder then, if, with all its kingdoms, and principalities, and powers, it has been compelled to desist from its fierce attacks; if monarchies in ancient times, and republics in modern, have been unable to maintain the persecution which they had begun: the weakness of God has overcome the strength of man. It is at this moment, when persecution has but lately ceased, that the visible Church is seen in all its beauty; the storm, however it might have ruffled her leaves, has refreshed her root, her main trunk shoots its branches anew, and she puts on double beauty for all her former uncomeliness. Her withered leaves, her rotten boughs, have been carried away by the violence of the tempest. Now she is reaping the reward of her sufferings, now is come the redemption to which she looked through the veil of her afflictions. But after a brief interval the world renews its attacks, and in a different manner; the high courage which she has shown, the splendid victory which she has gained, the stability which she has disclosed, draw the admiring gaze of men upon her, and gain attention to her doctrines; generous and candid minds are won over to her faith, every day she extends the curtains of her tent. But now that all is peace, now that she and the world are not openly and bodily at issue, the worldlings flock in, and with them the thoughts, the affections, and the passions of the world. The world now seduces her members into its slavery; and much more dangerous is this mode of its attack, inasmuch as the apostates which it makes do not go out from the Church, and relieve the labouring vessel of a heavy and useless cargo, as in time of persecution; but remain within, where their false doctrine eateth as doth a canker: hence heresies, seditions, strife, with all their train of evil; society civil and religious is disturbed, and at length broken up; calamity regains its turn.

III. But the storm is ushering in a glorious day, and between its gusts the Christian can overhear the tinkling of the trowel of the angelic masons rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. If his body perish in the storm, then hath the kingdom of heaven arrived to him indeed; he

has obtained his everlasting rest and citizenship there. If it survive, then are his eyes blessed with the sight of the purified Church of God, shining like gold from the furnace. The vineyard of the Lord lies before him, expanded in more than its former loveliness. The unsightly and noxious weeds have been removed, its hedge has been repaired, its winepress, its lake, and tutelary shed, have been replaced anew. Therefore, whichever lot betide him, he will look up, lift up his head, for his redemption draweth nigh.

A. B. EVANS,
The Church of God, p. 375.

The Signs of the Kingdom.

So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. S. LUKE xxi. 31.

I. 'THEN said He unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.' The time between the day on which our Lord spoke these words beside the temple, and that in which the temple fell, has been described by a dull Jewish historian and by the most profound of Roman historians. If the former tells of the bloody and fruitless encounters of his countrymen against the forces of the empire, the other tells us of the convulsions in the empire itself, of the ruin which was threatening it from its own defenders, of the German race which it could not subdue and which might at last subdue it. Both alike testify of the physical calamities which make a guilty and infidel, and therefore superstitious age, tremble more than any political trials; which *seem* to come more directly from the powers above. The warnings in this discourse point to much more general and grand events than those in the seventeenth chapter, which alluded to the stuff in the house, to the women grinding at the mill. By those who have the opportunity of comparing what Josephus and Tacitus have written with this passage in the Gospel, and who are eager to build some argument upon their likeness, surprising coincidences will be discovered.

How, then, may we use the Roman and Jewish historians? Thoughtfully studied, they will show us what a crisis was betokened by the facts which they are making known to us; how much more wonderful a one than we have ever fancied it to be; how completely it was the shaking of an old order; the announcement that some other must take its place. And if we say to ourselves, 'But how was it this, seeing that the Roman world did not pass away then—seeing that

we read our Lord's words here and elsewhere recorded, at last heaven and earth as at present constituted and circumstanced; all these things shall pass away, even as a dream that is dreamed or 'a tale that is told.' But the words of Christ Himself, spoken once on earth, and now handed down to us in the Scriptures of truth; these words, the very things which we might have thought most transitory, most fleeting, most fugitive; mere sounds, uttered by the help of that breath which is most of all evanescent, of those lips over which death exercises so powerful a dominion; these words, these sounds of the voice, these marks of a pen on the pages of a perishable book, these words of Christ Himself shall never pass away.

This is true in every sense.

I. And first, the revelations of Christ shall not pass away. When He 'came down from heaven,' as at the approaching season of Christmas, 'for us men and for our salvation,' it was, in part at least, as the Revealer of God. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?' My brethren, what God is, He is for ever. 'I am the Lord: I change not.' Have you ever reflected upon the disclosures which Jesus Christ has made to us of the character of God? That which He says God is, that we shall find God to be, and to be to us. Do not expect that there will be one God for you, and another God for me. Do not expect your case to be made an exception; so that there shall be for you a waiving of precedents, and a modification of rules, and a mitigation of consequences, such as there is not, such as you know there is not, for any other. Have you ever thought of those words, so formidable yet so soon forgotten, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God'? Why fearful? Because the holiness of God, and the truth of God, and the justice of God, must be 'a consuming fire' to all that has set itself up against these attributes. Because he who will keep his sin, he who will trifle with Christ's mercy, he who will neglect and despise the day of grace, he who has thus throughout life (in the Scripture sense of that term) 'tempted God,' tried experiments, that is, upon His power and upon His discernment and upon His truth, must find himself at last scorched and consumed by that intolerable light which is the concentration of all the separate rays of the sun of God's glory. Christ came to reveal God: and Christ's words of revelation shall not pass away.

II. And thus is it with the predictions of Christ. One of His offices is that of the Prophet; of the Prophet not in the larger only but also in the more restricted sense, as the foreteller or predicter of future events. The text occurs at the end of a chapter of predic-

tions. He has been telling how the temple of Jerusalem would be laid in ruins, and how a wrath of unexampled severity should light upon the land and upon the nation. He has spoken of a period briefly designated as 'the times' (or 'seasons') 'of the Gentiles,' during which Jerusalem itself should be trodden down by other nations, its own people being scattered, in captivity or exile, over the face of the earth. And He ended by saying that that very generation would not pass away till all this was fulfilled. Within seven-and-thirty years from the time of His thus speaking, the prophecy was literally accomplished. His words did not pass away. Neither shall they pass away in that other and yet more solemn meaning which we believe to lie under the other throughout this prophecy. We believe that, although the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was a fulfilment, it was not the only nor the chief fulfilment, of the words in which it was foretold. We have not yet seen what we believe to be the highest and deepest sense of the words, 'And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.' Here as elsewhere there is both a minor and also a complete fulfilment of prophecy. The fall of Jerusalem was the minor fulfilment: the second Advent will be the complete, the exhaustive accomplishment.

The words of Christ never pass away. So is it with His disclosures of God: so is it with His predictions of things to come: so is it also, yet more specially and practically, with His grave warnings, and with His gracious promises.

III. The warnings of Christ are manifold. But they may be summed up in two: His warnings against sin, and His warnings against carelessness.

(1) Great need have we to lay to heart that expression of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' It is not without cause that Jesus Christ addresses so many of His warnings to definite sins; speaks to us so plainly, so by name, of those special sins to which we are liable; leaves us with no pretence for thinking that we can perhaps keep a small sin or two and yet be saved; forewarns us, on the contrary, that any one sin cherished—in other words, any one sin yielded to, allowed, suffered, in heart or in life—must exclude a man from God's kingdom; that, hard as it may appear, hard as it may be, to expel, to eradicate a sin, it is harder still (and the only alternative) to 'dwell with everlasting burnings'; and expressly admonishes us, not only that our 'sin will' most certainly 'find us out,' but that it is the very battle-field of that great struggle, the issue of which, for every one of us, must be life or death.

Such is Christ's warning against sin. And of it too He says that

His words never pass away. They are verified, over and over again, in every age and in every generation of man.

(2) But some amongst us are saying in their hearts, 'I thank God I am a moral man: I thank God I am not like many: not like this neighbour or that friend: I never yielded to the demon of sensuality or passion or lust: I can hear Christ's warning unabashed, unterrified.' 'Be not highminded,' my friend, 'but fear'! There is a warning against general carelessness as well as against definite sin. Nay, you must remember some of these unchangeable, imperishable words of Christ, which make a self-satisfied, indifferent, unhumbled condition even worse than that of one who is tied and bound by sin. We need Christ's warning against carelessness, even as His warning against sin. 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always,' thus He sums up the discourse for all alike, 'that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

IV. And if the warnings pass not away, but are ever sure, ever steadfast, so also is it, in the last place, with the promises. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.' Christ who came to reveal, and to predict, and to warn, came also to promise. In the name and by the authority of God Himself, He stood upon the earth, and made engagements. Christ's promises never pass away.

C. J. VAUGHAN,
Words from the Gospels, p. 122.

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

The Hopelessness of Unbelief.

What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? ISAIAH v. 4.

IN a subsequent verse God condescends to explain what is here meant by His 'vineyard,' so that there might be no doubt as to the scope and import of the passage—'For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.' The representation, then, of the passage is that God had done everything which could be done for the spiritual culture of His ancient Church. Nay, in order to put this fact in the most impressive point of view, He throws it into the shape of a question to the Jews themselves, making them His witnesses, and calling on them to confess how all the means of moral husbandry had been

exhausted on themselves. 'And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?' And yet, although the Jews themselves be the witnesses that there was nothing more which could be done, the labour had been ineffectual; for God goes on to ask—'Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?'

There is something very affecting, very startling, in the assertion, that 'as much had been done as could be done'—that there remained nothing more to be tried in order to produce from the ancient Church those fruits of righteousness which are the source of vital godliness. And if this could be said of the Jewish vineyard, what shall be said of the Christian? What more could have been done for us than has been done, acquainted, as we are, with the full scheme of redemption, and subjected to the influences of the Holy Spirit?

I. As much has been done as could have been done to the vineyard because of the agency through which redemption was effected. You know that the Author of our redemption was none other than the Eternal Son of God, who had covenanted from all eternity to become the Surety and Substitute for the fallen. It was not within the power of an angel to have made atonement for our sins. The angelic nature might have been united to the human, but there would not have been the Divinity of the one to give sacred worth to the sufferings of the other. So far as we have the power of ascertaining, no being but a Divine, taking to himself flesh, could have satisfied justice in the stead of fallen man. This is precisely the arrangement which has been made on our behalf. This shows the greatness of what has been done for the 'vineyard.' I shall know how great when I can measure the distance between the eternal and the perishable, Omnipotence and feebleness, immortality and death!

II. We may affirm, that as much has been done as could have been done for the 'vineyard,' regard being had to the completeness and fulness of the work, as well as to the greatness of its Author. We might have been sure beforehand that what the Divine Agent undertook would be thoroughly effected; and accordingly the more we examine the scheme of redemption the more we perceive it in every respect perfect. The sins of the whole race were laid on Christ, and such was the value which the Divinity gave to the endurances of the humanity, that the whole race might be pardoned if the whole race would put faith in the Mediator as punished in their stead. There is consequently nothing in our own guiltiness to make us hesitate as to the possibility of forgiveness. The scheme of redemption not only provides for our pardon, so that punishment may be avoided, it pro-

vides also for our acceptance, so that happiness may be obtained. And the faith which so interests us in Christ that we are reckoned to have satisfied the full penalties in Him, obtains for us also imputation of His righteousness; so that we have a spotless covering in which to appear before God.

III. There is yet one more method of showing that so much has been done for the 'vineyard' that there remains nothing more which the Owner can do. We are bound to regard the Gospel of Christ Jesus as the grand revelation of future punishment and reward. Until the Redeemer appeared, and brought more direct tidings from the invisible world, the sanctions of eternity were scarcely, if at all, brought to bear on the occupations of time. It cannot, indeed, be said that Christ first taught the immortality of the soul, for the soul from the beginning was her own witness, though oftentimes the testimony was indirectly given, that she perished not with the body. Yet so imperfect had been the foregoing knowledge as compared with that communicated by Christ, that S. Paul declared of the Saviour—that He 'abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.' In the teaching of the Redeemer we have such clear information as to our living under a retributive government, whose recompenses shall be accurately dealt out in another state of being, that ignorance can be no man's excuse if he is living as though God took no note of human actions. And we reckon that much of what has been done for the 'vineyard' consists in the greatness of the reward which the Gospel proposes to righteousness, and the greatness of the punishment which it denounces on impenitence. Much has been done if the sanctions of the Gospel are of so sublime and awful a description that we are animated to self-denial by the promise of heaven, where there is 'fulness of joy for ev rmore,' and warned back from wickedness by the threatenings of 'a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched.' It was not redemption from mere temporary evil that Jesus Christ effected. The consequences of transgression spread themselves through eternity, and the Saviour, when He bowed His head and said 'It is finished!' had provided for the removal of these consequences in all the immenseness, whether of their magnitude or their duration. And in nothing is what has been done for the 'vineyard' greater than in this—that redemption deals with everlasting evil—that it does not indeed make men immortal, but, finding them immortal, and their immortality one of agony and shame, it sheds its influence throughout their unlimited existence, wringing the curse from its every instant, and leaving a blessing in its stead.

H. MELVILL,

Penny Pulpit, No. 1796.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Aspect of Christianity towards the Lower Animals.

Isaiah xi. 1-9.

I. THE charge is frequently brought against Christ's Gospel, that, professing to be a complete rule of life, it yet leaves almost untouched great departments of humanity and wide fields of conduct. It hardly touches, for instance, questions of politics, questions of war, the question of slavery, the great question of social ethics, the questions bearing on the relations of capital and labour, or on the behaviour of man to those inferior orders of beings, living, sentient, and, some would add, intelligent—intelligent as man himself, over which, even the philosopher admits, some power or law of nature has made him supreme. It must be admitted that there is nothing in the teaching of our Lord or of His Apostles that directly instructs us in our conduct towards the brutes. On one occasion, when S. Paul quotes a precept of the Mosaic law, which showed the wonderful thoughtfulness of that great code for even the smallest details of human behaviour—I mean the precept, 'Thou shalt not muzzle thine ox while treading out the corn,' where the application of the precept seems and is direct and indisputable—the exposition almost startles and confuses us when he gives it a novel and, as we may deem it, an unnatural significance. 'Doth God,' he asks, 'take care for oxen? or saith He it altogether for our sakes?'—for the sake of us ministers of the Gospel, who have to live of the Gospel? 'For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he that plougheth should plough in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.' And that this was the fixed interpretation of the passage in the mind of S. Paul, and not a mere fancy or rhetorical flourish of the moment, is proved by the fact that on another occasion, writing to Timothy, he applies the precept to the same purpose. 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, for the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the labourer is worthy of his reward.' And if we turn from teaching to conduct, out of the three acts in our Lord's life which, as Bengel has remarked, had a punitive character—the driving of the traffickers from the temple courts, the withering of the fig-tree by the wayside, and the permission of the devils cast out of the man to enter into the swine—the last certainly involved a destruction of life, which commentators, anxious to vindicate the absolute mercifulness which they suppose must needs be inherent in a perfectly moral character, have found it hard, with their imperfect knowledge of the circumstances, to justify or even to explain.

It would take me out of my course to repeat or amplify these explanations, but I may say, in passing on, that our Lord's conduct was at least in harmony with the constitution of things of which He then formed a part—in which pain and suffering are not only permitted to exist, but are sometimes necessary to be inflicted—in which lives of lower value have often to be sacrificed to preserve lives that are more precious; a constitution or system of things under which we experience ourselves to be in this present state, but which, as Bishop Butler says, is allowed not to be the perfection of moral government.

II. Further, before we make this apparent want of explicitness and completeness in its rules a reproach against Christianity, we must remember what Christianity is, and what it has undertaken to do. It started upon what I may venture to call the deposit of truth that already existed in the world. There was a supernatural gift in the first ages of the Church called the discerning of spirits; but there was also a natural endowment to which appeal is constantly made in the last resort—the discerning of truth. The Gospel did not care, did not need, to republish what was already known or recognised. In Christ, no doubt, all things became new. Old duties became tinged with a new light, robed in a fresh beauty, animated with a loftier motive, performed with a more conscious power. Human nature waited for the Gospel before it could cry out 'In all these things I am more than conqueror,' or, again, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' But the things which could not be done adequately because of the weakness of the flesh, or the faltering of the purpose, were yet recognised as duties that ought to be done. There was the struggle between the law of sin and the law of God,—the reluctant admission that the commandment was holy and just and good, even while men in the wild bursts of passion were trampling it under their feet. The great heroic virtues of Paganism—justice, the love of freedom, magnanimity, courage, patriotism—are not, as is sometimes supposed, ignored by Christianity, but rather taken for granted; for, as Dr. Newman says, 'There is something true and divinely revealed in every religion all over the earth, overloaded as it may be, and at times even stifled, by impieties which the corrupt will and understanding of man have incorporated with it. Such are the doctrines of the power and presence of an invisible God, of His moral law and governance, of the obligation of duty, and the certainty of a just judgment and of reward and punishment as eventually dispensed to individuals; so that revelation, properly speaking, is a universal and not a local gift.' And he goes on to say, 'This vague and uncertain family of religious truths, originally from God, but sojourning without the

sanction of miracle or a definite home, as pilgrims up and down the world, and discernible and separable from the corrupt legends with which they are mixed up by the spiritual mind alone, may be called the dispensation of Paganism.'

III. The operation of Christianity upon humanity—I mean the natural and moral operation—I am leaving out of the account that great and inscrutable mystery of godliness which took away, by a plenary and sufficient act of sacrifice, the sin of the world,—I say, the moral operation of Christianity upon man has been mainly twofold. It has projected into the midst of the phenomena of life, by themselves so perplexing, so incongruous, the spectacle of a Divine Exemplar—that visible type of virtue of which Socrates felt that, if it could be seen coming down from heaven, all men perforce would worship it. And, further, it has bestowed on man the promise, and, to those who by faith have made the promise their own, the experience, of a previously unknown, unsuspected, or, at best, partially developed power. Sin, says the Apostle, need no longer have the dominion over those who are now brought under the influence of grace, and are not merely guided by the inexorable rigours of a law. And so the essential virtue or secret of Christianity was to set before men's eyes a Divine ideal, and then to put into their hearts the yearning desire to make this ideal their own. To know Christ and to follow after, to reach forward and to apprehend, to find Christ living in him, and himself not frustrating the grace of God—this was the endeavour of the great Apostle Paul. The power of Christianity was seen, not so much in the creeds which it formulated, or in the worship which it elaborated, as in the tempers which it framed and formed. And certainly mercifulness to animals would be an element of its temper. I am told that brutal or careless Neapolitan muleteers, when rebuked for their savage treatment of the poor cattle whose overtasked strength is unequal to the burden which is laid upon them, not unfrequently reply, *Ma non sono Cristiani* ('But they are not Christians'). This implies that man has no duty towards, and no responsibility in respect of, brutes. There is a touching simplicity in the way in which Mrs. Oliphant describes the character of the great Italian saint of the thirteenth century, S. Francis of Assisi—'He was a man overflowing with sympathy for man and beast,—for God's creatures wherever and howsoever he encountered them. Not only was every man his brother, but every animal,—the sheep in the fields, the birds in the branches, the brother ass on which he rode, the sister bees who took refuge in his kind protection. He was a friend of everything that suffered or rejoiced. No emotion went beyond his sympathy. His heart rose to see the gladness of nature, and melted over the dis-

tresses of the smallest and meanest creature on the face of God's earth. 'And this tenderness towards the animal creation was based,' says Mrs. Oliphant, 'on the noble conception of a redeemed world—a universe all pervaded by the sense of the Creator's presence and the Saviour's love. The visionaries of that rude age were as children full of sweet unspeakable fancies, and that strange power of inspiring the outside world with their own simple sublime fulness of thought and feeling which is the inheritance of babes. It is sometimes hard enough now to understand how a strong-hearted, unpitying, unloving, faithless man can yet be dearer to his Creator than an honest, patient, faithful, all-enduring animal, but in the time of Francis the wonder was still greater. It is evident Francis felt himself justified in addressing the spiritual consciousness of every living thing. He was their superior in the economy of Providence. They could not answer him in speech, but they could in obedience; and God was the Father, the Preserver, the conscious Head of all. In this confidence the gentle Francis moved about a world all peopled with his brethren, not only putting his divine commands upon them, but endeavouring after their edification with a certain ineffable, beautiful, wise foolishness, as our children do by instinct—as an angel might do by insight superior to ours.'

Never, perhaps, will the glorious vision of Isaiah, when no one shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, be fulfilled in this world. It is a tendency of things that is indicated rather than a result—a tendency to that far-off event to which the whole creation moves. Meanwhile, we can all work on the lines of this tendency. And, surely, on ears that have heard, and to hearts that have been touched by, the cry of suffering forced by cruelty or wantonness even from the feeblest, meanest creature which God has made, that great voice from heaven will break as a sound of exceeding joy, when it shall be said, in the day of the restitution of all things to something higher than the primal bliss of paradise, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'

BISHOP FRASER,
Penny Pulpit, New Series, No. 738.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

Questions.

'Whither goest thou?' JUDGES xix. 17.

HERE are certain questions you may hear put to each other by people every day, and fifty times in a day. These questions we should undoubtedly describe as trivial, unimportant—as having no sort of interest for any one except the questioner and the one questioned. Such questions as 'Where are you going?' 'When do you return?' What are you going to do to-day?'

You hear a person put one of these questions to another. You do not so much as care to hear the answer. It has no sort of interest for *you.*

And suppose that we were required to sit down, write out, and classify, as far as we were able, the hundred and one questions of all sorts which we might have chanced to hear, between sunrise and sunset, put by people to one another.

I think that we should first of all classify *important* questions. 'What is the most practical way of giving relief to the unemployed, and of dealing with the increase of pauperism?' 'Are we prepared for war?' 'Are we likely ever to stamp out the slave-trade?' etc.

Questions such as these are full of interest to the statesman, the political economist, the expert. They open up many serious considerations. It would be impossible to answer them off-hand. They would need to be thought out and solved.

Then, under another heading, I daresay we should include *interesting* questions. 'What shades will be most worn, what fashions prevail in the coming season?' 'What will the favourite opera be; what the most notable lawsuit?'

And as we began with *important* questions, I fancy we should end, as a sort of after-thought, with '*unimportant*,' '*trivial*' ones—'Where are you going?' 'How long shall you be away?' etc.

And yet, by a strange contradiction, it is just one of these very trivial questions which sometimes sets a man, for the first time in his life, thinking. He hears a trivial question put, and answered; and then the answer, viewed by the light of subsequent events, brings before him, in a moment, life in all its seriousness, man in all his littleness, blindness, helplessness; death, in all its solemnity, and all its terrible certainty.

the whole direction and manner of whose lives has been changed by their searching and resistless power. Nothing like this is true of merely human speech or writing; we quote the great chiefs of thought, the great students of human nature; they illustrate our meaning, when we want an authority; but they do not control us in spite of ourselves: they do not revolutionise our lives. One only can do this: He who saw into the depths of the nature which He had created before He made it His own, and who 'spake as never man spake' accordingly.

H. P. LIDDON,

Penny Pulpit, New Series, No. 1121.

Conscience and the Bible.

'*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me.*' S. JOHN v. 39.

CONSCIENCE must be a test of a Divine revelation, that is to say, God has given us a conscience which is to guide us in distinguishing between right and wrong, and if that be one of His gifts in our own nature which we are constantly ourselves employing from day to day, and on the authority of which we are exacting certain things from our fellow-men, it is quite certain that anything that is really a revelation from Him must have its testing in conscience. This, then, is a test which every man can apply; it is one of the strongest things about the Bible that there is a test that every man can apply. We even may not know very largely the history of these books which make up the Bible, we may not be intimately acquainted with the tests and the evidence by which we propose to reach the conviction that these tests are reliable; but we have here before us a book which professes to be God's Book, and here is a test which every reader of it may at once clearly and thoroughly apply—How does that Book harmonise with the teaching of conscience?

I. *What is our view of the Bible itself?* It is a history; that is characteristic of it. All through it is a history; and it is a revelation in the midst of that history. It is peculiarly valuable to us as the children of men because it contains a record of historical occurrences which show us human life in varying phases, and, at the same time, presents these in such a manner that we recognise the Divine will in the midst of it, and the Divine judgment and the Divine intervention for man's help. It is, besides, a gathering of books, so that we shall have to separate it, putting it into several books, and say, Each book here has its own special reference to the history of our race. But while it is in this way a gathering of books, it is one Book. It has in itself a complete literature, and the

Christian Church is in this position—the moment you translate that Book into any tongue, you have a literature for the people. Now, if this be the general aspect of it, the first thing that comes out quite clearly of the Book is the contrast between the Old Testament and the New; that is a contrast so clear and sharp that every one at once sees that the line of evidence must be decided in view of it. For what is that Old Testament Scripture? It is the account of the marching of past generations toward the sun, having brought to bear upon them something of the light of heaven and always in the midst of it—onward, onward still, in prospect of a great Deliverer and a great deliverance. Therefore, you see that the Old Testament Scripture is necessarily a preparation for that which is to come,—something of the glancing of the heavenly light down into the darkness of the human family that they may have encouragement and hope. And when you pass from that Old Testament Scripture into the New you find Jesus, the Revealer of the Father, and understand how great is the advance which has suddenly been made. 'The Word was in the beginning with God, and was God.' 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' In the coming of the Saviour you have the fulfilment of all the Old Testament record. In the coming and teaching, in the working and dying of Jesus, you have the closing up of the record with enough to point onwards to the heavenly glory and tell us of that end towards which Jesus Christ has been working.

II. The testimony of conscience as to the Bible is clearly this—that this record from Genesis to Revelation, recording some dark things in human history, very dark things in the history of even good men, is a Bible condemning the wrong at every page, and bringing those who transgress to remember that there is no way back again but by penitence. This Book, through all its pages, is constantly throwing its restraints around the hearts of men to keep back from action the powers of evil that are within them; this Book by its full teaching is giving promise of power to man from the God of heaven that he may become holy, and is giving to man the assurance of 'grace for grace,' until, 'forgetting the things which are behind'—forgetting them—he shall 'reach forward to those things which are before,' and shall know that his destiny is to be Godlike, holy as God is holy, 'without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' It is the testimony of man's conscience that there is no teaching in literature grander than this, as there is no character in history which can even for a single hour bear comparison with Jesus of Nazareth.

H. CALDERWOOD,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxvi. p. 266.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

The Preciousness of the Bible.

What advantage then hath the Jew? Much every way, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. ROMANS iii. 1, 2.

NO one has ever doubted what S. Paul means by these words. He speaks of the Old Testament Scriptures, and what he says concerning them certainly conveys an extraordinary notion of their value and importance. To have been the authorised keeper of them he accounts to be the very chiefest glory of the Jewish nation.

I. The Collect for to-day is a very remarkable one. It regards the written deposit, and is, in fact, none other than a prayer for a blessing on its use. What specially occasioned its introduction, I make no doubt, was the newly recovered use of Scripture. It is a plain fact that the Romish branch of the Church Catholic keeps the Scriptures from the people. Our forefathers, previous to the Reformation, knew little of the English Bible. Slow instalments had been made: but it was not till 1549 that one lesson from the Old Testament and another from the New were read aloud in English in churches. *Then* appeared the Collect, and it reads to me like the Church's burst of grateful joy at the recovery of the treasure of which she had been deprived so long.

II. Think of the wonderful Providence that hath watched over Holy Scripture from the beginning. Why, there is no miracle comparable to that which has preserved to us the Scriptures.

Then, further, the Old Testament pre-supposes the New. Neither could be intelligible without the other. And both alike have the same mysterious essence—call it typical, mystical, spiritual or what you will, whereby the common events of men's lives, and the ordinary course of human history, are found to be expressive of heavenly truths,—to be instinct with divinest teaching. Do *we* of this Church and nation act as if we were fully conscious of the responsibility we have incurred in being intrusted, as the Jews were, with the Scriptures?

J. W. BURGON,
Ninety-one Short Sermons, No. 3.

The Word of God

And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. REVELATION xix. 13.

I. THE LIVING WORD.

TRUE INTERPRETATION OF text not difficult.

John had written, twenty years before, the words which carry us back to the book of Genesis: 'In the beginning was the

Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (S. John i.).

He remembered the same in writing his first Epistle. (Quote 1 S. John i. 1.)

The Word of Life found its true significance in *Him*—whom S. John saw in vision, whose 'eyes were as a flame of fire . . . Word of God.' (Quote Rev. xix. 12.)

JESUS CHRIST, the Eternal Son, often spoken of under the symbolism of *The Word.*

As our words are the reflex of our thoughts, *He* is the express image of the Father, the uncreated Wisdom of God.

As we make known our thoughts in speech, so God made known His will by Him—*The Word made Flesh* (John i. 14).

The Messiah, always designated by the Jews, *The Memra=The Word of God.*

He wore a vesture dipped in blood. His own.

II. THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD.

The Bible. *Sealed* by the Blood of the Incarnate Son of God.
Vindicated, upheld by noble army of Martyrs.
" " " glorious company of Apostles and Prophets.

THE SPOKEN WORDS (OF CHRIST) RECORDED are still real and living words.

The long roll of Old Testament history and prophecy is still *God's Voice.*

THE VISIBLE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD not without its vesture dipped in blood.

The crimson stains of the Temple Sacrifices foreshadowed *The* great Sacrifice—the Eternal Word Himself.

The blood of all the prophets from Abel to Zacharias.

The crimson robe of Jesus Christ—suffering and sacrifice.—The Early Christians, *Polycarp*, and all Martyrs from S. Stephen onwards.

III. VALUE OF BIBLE.

These Thoughts help us to *prize the Bible more.*

LET US strive to catch the accents of His voice in the Wisdom of the Word, listen for the echoes within, and let our attitude be, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'

The Preacher's Book, First Series, No. 2.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

The Incidental Advantages of Study of the Bible.

Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, which is in righteousness. 2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

IT is common to urge upon men a study of the Bible as a matter of duty—a part of the 'thou shalt' of God; and also as a matter of worship—the other part of prayer and praise. While it is fortunate that we have a Book which can lay the claim of duty upon us, and still more fortunate that we have a Book worthy to be incorporated into our worship, there are other aspects in which the Bible offers itself, which might be called its *advantages*. And so I will speak of some of the advantages of a study of the Bible, or some of the side-reasons why it should be studied by all men. I say *studied* rather than read, because the mere reading of such a book is of little value. We *read* a novel, or a history, or the newspaper, but we *study* a book of science, of social philosophy, of ethics, or a great poem or drama.

I. Look at it as a *book of history*. Upon the whole, there is no study that so broadens the mind and feeds it so richly and sweetly as history. It brings the wisdom of the ages together; it teaches charity by showing us under what burdens and by what paths of suffering humanity has struggled on; it shows us that there is a plan and a power at work beyond that of man; and, above all, it reveals an upward progress, and so feeds hope and stimulates to good efforts. But to produce this effect history must be studied in a large way, and as covering broad reaches of time. The Bible presents itself to us first of all as a history; that is the form which it wears. The Bible gives us history in its broadest stretch and in its largest meaning. Its affiliations lead us into all history, and with an impulse that carries us on through the Christian centuries; for one will not follow the Church through the Acts and the Epistles of S. Paul without feeling required to trace it along the twofold current of East and West.

II. Look at the Bible as a *book of political science*. One cannot be a good citizen in this country without some knowledge of the principles of government. The nature of our government presupposes such knowledge—a supposition that is met in a larger degree than is commonly thought. A study of the Hebrew Commonwealth is valuable, because it shows how close and real is the relation of the nation to God, and how vital is righteousness and fidelity to God. We have in the Bible the finest illustrations of patriotism to be found in all history. It is a patriotism unflinching, fervent, indestructible; it sank the individual in the nation, and both in God;

it made social life the main thing; religion, literature, education—all were national, and so the whole nation marched on together; personal and religious life was first and mainly a national life. There was no individualism, there was no communism, but a happy balance between man as an individual and as a member of the race, such as we find in nature. We are individuals; we are also members of the race, and both exist in God. A true nation is a true expression of this threefold fact. Nowhere is it so clearly set forth as in the Hebrew Commonwealth.

III. Look at the Bible as a *book of biography.* We balance our study of history and of social institutions by a study of individuals. There is nothing more charming, nothing more instructive, than the lives of great or remarkable men. The most enduring book in the world after the Bible is *Plutarch's Lives.* 'The proper study of mankind is man.' In the lives of others we learn the possibilities of human nature—how great, how various, how good or bad it can be. We learn thus how to bear evil fortune, how to guide our course and shape our conduct. There is no stimulus like that which comes from the lives of great men; no influence so penetrating and moulding. The Bible is permanently a book of biographies. It is a book of religious history, but the history is always turning on a man. It is a book of religion, but the religion is that of real life, and of separate men.

IV. The Bible is worthy of study as a *book full of undeveloped forces and truths.* I mean that we find in it those facts and laws and truths which are working out the destiny of man. They are spread out in a life; they are uttered in words. The parables of Christ—if we but knew it—contain the history of the world and of mankind for all eternity. The Sermon on the Mount states the laws by which human society progresses and will reach its goal of perfection. The acts of Christ's life illustrate or reveal how this material world is immersed in the real world of the spirit, where the miraculous becomes natural.

T. T. MUNGER,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxiii. p. 88.

The Book of Life.

(BIBLE SOCIETY SERMON.)

The book of life. REVELATION xvii. 8.

I. WE call the Bible the Book of Life. So it is in many senses. It is a Book of Life to many souls, as it awakens in them the possibilities of their existence. It is the Book of Life, as it awakens vitality in human institutions, as it makes the whole world

from end to end live with a new vitality. It is the Book of Life because of the great vitality that fills itself also from end to end. As we think of it, every element of human vitality is there. There is the vitality which belongs to the individual life, that great, strong manifestation of humanity which sets itself forth here and there through all the history of man, a manifestation of that vitality in all humankind, and which shows itself especially in the great, strong beings that stand forth with their majestic presence, such as Moses and David, and Isaiah and Daniel, and Paul and John and Peter—stand forth as the manifestation of that vital power with which the Bible is full from end to end. And then there is also the vitality of institutions and history of that wonderful race whose history is given to us in the first part of the Bible; of that continued dealing of man with man; and underneath it all there is the perpetual life of God, that vitality of which man's vitality is but the manifestation and the exhibition, as the great source, flowing through everything in the Bible, and giving completeness to everything we find in it, even on the surface. It throbs and pulsates throughout the human life, for as we look into the future of our human race one thing, and only one thing, is sure, and that is that man has not yet attained the fulness of his life; that he is to go on increasing in every part of his life, growing richer and richer.

Men know the mystery of their simple humanity as they never knew it before—the simple intrinsic mystery of human life, the simple wonder of being a man, that has come to us, I believe, in the richness of our progress, in the largeness of our sympathy, in the deep study of ourselves as it never came to our fathers, to the generations of dreamers and poets and philosophers of other days. It is in this significance of the present and the future that it seems to me there comes the great promise at once of the perpetual influence of the Bible, and also of a deeper use of the Bible, and a profounder understanding of its meaning, to a closer touch upon our human life.

II. It is the Bible of the Incarnate One; of the Divine manifestation in our human life. It is the Person that makes that great Book sacred. In the beginning He begins to loom into the sight of those who wrote. Years of history and narrative pass by, till at last it all grows solemn and the great pause comes, and then in the majesty of His simplicity, in the glory and the greatness of His infancy, He is here in human flesh. And then the wondrous years in which He walked upon our earth, and the marvellous words that He spoke in the revelation of His nature. And then, when the great crisis comes, when the last issue of His life is fulfilled in the crucifixion and the resurrection, it is He that is coming closer to the souls of men, that men may know Him throughout all the ages that are to come.

The Bible is not a law or a creed, but a Person. The Bible is Jesus Christ, and it is because He was manifested 'that men may have life, and have it more abundantly.' The book which embodies Him, which tells of His presence and possession of the total world—that is the inspiration of our life. Men say: 'Shall the Bible have the prominence in human thought, shall it be the inspiration of human life, experience, and knowledge in the future that it has been in the past?' Let us not ask it of the Bible, but of Christ. If man is, in the years to come, to know himself a child of God as never before, then shall He, who is the Son of God and Son of man, be nearer and never further from our human life than in the past. The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of freedom, and so it is to be the Bible more and more because it has this great capacity. Men think of the Bible as a book of restraint, as if it were perpetually laid upon men's lives, bidding them not to do this and not to do that. When the Bible—that is to say, Christ—shall be the revelation of His own capacity, and man shall declare that sin in his nature is an abhorrent and foreign thing, shall claim more of the Divine life that belongs to Him as essentially and absolutely and eternally and unchangeably as the Son of God, then the great freedom of the Bible is to come. Freedom is the noblest passion of the day, and shall be more intensely so in the years to come. Have we not a right to say that the things which separate the Bible from our comprehension are the things that are going to bring the Bible closer to us in the years to come? The Bible is the Book of Miracles. Men sometimes sadly turn away from the great Book because inspiration is upon every page, and miracle pervades the activity which fills it from end to end. Inspiration and miracle—what are the words more to us except the larger possession of the mind of God and the wondrous Son of Man as He knows more and more of His divinity? The time has been when men said: 'Give us a Bible without the supernatural and the miracle.' The time is coming when men shall say: 'No Bible shall satisfy the sons of men who have learned that they are the children of God, except as it draws men nearer to God, and makes man manifest in God, the power of miracle which comes of absolute consecration to and union with Him.'

III. It is an interesting work in which this great Society has been engaged—the spreading of the simple Scriptures as they stand, without note or comment. And it seems to me the sanction and justification of it belong to it in the aspect of which I have spoken to you. No man is in the possession of any needs which the Bible has yet supplied but feels the deepness and extent and immensity of the power that is in the Bible to satisfy the yet unknown needs of man. Therefore let it go forth in its simplicity. Let the Society trust it to

the soul of Man as God trusted it. Let us have some of the confidence in it which is in the heart of the Bible itself. Welcome every deeper study of the Word of God. Welcome every profounder knowledge that man can get of that which its deepest words intend. Welcome every study that every possible criticism can bring to these great words which man is to measure with what power of measurement he may at any period possess. We stand just at this little moment where our lives are set, on these few inches where our feet may tread, in these few moments while we breathe the mortal air, the inheritors of all that the past has known, taking the precious Bible into our hands, and giving it down into the hands of those coming after us, making it to supply the sustenance, the inspiration of the things we have to do; gathering from it, from the Christ who is in it, from the Christ who is it, the strength to live heroically in these few days of ours, and then giving it forward into the generations that are to come

PHILLIPS BROOKS,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xl. No. 1017.

The Best Book.

(FOR A CHILDREN'S SERMON.)

The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.
PSALM CXIX. 72.

THAT is what David said about God's Word. David had not so big a Bible as we have; he had only part of the Old Testament, and none of the New. Yet he valued it above thousands of gold and silver. There are a great many things which money can buy, but there are some things which money cannot buy, and which we can only get from God's Word.

I. Money will buy you a house and lands, but it won't buy you happiness. There have been many who have lived in grand houses, and worn soft clothing, and yet have never been happy, and have been afraid to die. Now God's Book will teach you how to be happy, and it will show you how you may have a home eternal in the Heavens, without money and without price. It is only the children of the rich who have lands and houses to inherit, but God's Word tells every one of you, no matter how poor you are, that you have an estate to come into, a property to hold. In Baptism you were made children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. No money can buy those blessings for you.

II. Again, money will bring you all kinds of comforts and luxuries, but it can't give you health, or make you good. Delicate food is of no use to us if we have not got the appetite to enjoy it. Fine

clothes are worthless to a poor cripple who must lie in bed. But what money cannot do, God's Word can; it will teach you how to bear sickness, or any other trouble: it will teach you how to say, 'Thy will be done.' And I said, money can't make you good. A little boy was once asked what holiness meant; and he answered, 'It means being *clean inside*.' No money can make you clean inside. God's Word will show you that 'the Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin,' and it will teach you to pray like this: 'Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.'

III. Money will bring us many friends and acquaintances, but not of the best kind. I remember when I was at school, if my friends sent me a hamper of good things, or some money, I found I had many more friends just then than I had before. But when the money was spent, and the hamper was empty, I soon missed my new friends. The kind of friendship which money buys is not worth having. But God's Word will tell you about a Friend who is always true and faithful. Whether you are reading the Old Testament or the New, whether you study the Law or the Prophets, or read about the Judges, or the Kings, you will find something about Jesus. He said, 'Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me.' Whenever you read your Bible, always do so with one object, always read *looking for Jesus Christ.* And you who are growing up into big boys and girls, take care how you neglect your Bible when you go out into the world.

H. J. WILMOT BUXTON,
The Children's Bread, p. 11.

The Power of a Child.

(FOR A CHILDREN'S SERMON.)

A little child shall lead them. ISAIAH xi. 6.

AS I walked the other day towards a green hill with many clumps of trees upon it, admiring its soft beauty as it lay in the early evening twilight, suddenly one of my little companions cried—

'Oh, look, look!'

And he pointed to a place in the trees on the top of the hill, which had just begun to sparkle and glow with the intense fires of a huge diamond.

'What is it?' he continued. 'The trees are on fire!'

It was the large sweep of a curved roof of glass, high enough up to catch the rays of the sun, which, to us, had already set. His level beams had played upon it, kindling it with some of the splendour of his own exceeding glory.

It was *one bit* of the fire of the hidden sun.

Now I want you to turn your thoughts into that heart of yours, and to think of the kind of feel there is in it when you are looking on a little baby. How warm and pleasant and blessed a feel it is. But remember, that too is only a little of the fire of a hidden sun.

It is a glow of the heart of the living God.

I. Think of the feel in the heart of Vincent de Paul one day when he heard the plea of children he had never seen, and who were far away. He was appointed by the King of France as a chaplain or clergyman to the King's convicts. Convicts were a kind of prisoners to whom the greatest cruelties and miseries were appointed, and their sufferings at the time I am telling you about were simply horrible. One day this chaplain chanced to see the officers of the prison leading to it a man whose quiet face was full of rare depth of woe. He was riveted by the sight, and spoke to the man. 'I am a father,' he said, encouraged by such a look of sympathy, 'I am a father and a husband.' He could say no more, and broke down in unutterable grief. He was not thinking of the tortures that awaited him within that prison door, but of his desolate home, and a picture of his little ones who would never see their father more rose before Vincent's tender heart. He could not bear it. 'I have no children, I have no wife,' he said; and under the impulse of his feelings for little ones, he bade the prison guards take off the chains from their prisoner and put them on to him, and went himself to the dampness and foulness of the prison, and suffered its cruelties; and the amazed man went back to his home to live with his little ones.

It was a beautiful feeling which swelled in Vincent's heart; but the grandest thing about it is that what he felt for those unknown little folks, God feels towards you and me and all mankind. It was a shaft of the love of God.

II. Think too of the power of a child over the heart of which Jesus tells, a heart in a farmer's house on the plains of Syria. Round about it are groups of graceful, feathery palm-trees and curious humpbacked camels, and the quaint wooden ploughs of a now ancient, bygone world. But within it is a genuine father's heart. One of his sons has pained him and left him, and wasted all his kind gifts, and sent no tidings of where he is. He has sinned against his love, and injured his health, and spoilt all the joys of his life.

It is now long years ago since he left his father's roof, and through them all every thought of him has brought only pain; and the old father has settled down into a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Never even by so much as a word has that boy asked, through all those years, as to whether his father is alive or dead. He has been a grievous, cruel, and worthless son.

Poor, hungry, and in want, he at length comes home, to find that the heart he has grieved and pained for these many wicked years loves him still, loves him with a love that is far closer than his brother's; from which all his shameful sins and wrongs—nothing, indeed—could separate. He is loved as richly as when he played at home, a loving, chubby, pleasant boy.

And the feel of that father, so patient, so lasting, so strong, was but the feel of God to us all. It is a glow of the hidden sun.

Still, warm with the very feel of God as human hearts sometimes are, like the big sweep of that sparkling roof of glass kindling with the light of the setting sun, they are, at best, never more than a tiny sparkle of that glory which is unseen.

And that broad expanse of the roof of glass soon lost its glory and was black as the night; for the light of the sun had gone. But, gone from that roof, where was it still? Where!—it was still in the sun; the glorious fires were still burning there. And now for my grandest truth. Should a child lose its power over a father, over a mother, over us all, and we felt no more towards a baby than we feel towards a stone, children would have power over God still, and all lovely feelings would be in Him. 'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'

B. WAUGH,
The Children's Sunday Hour, p. 285.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Joy and Peace in Believing.
1 Peter i. 8, 9; Rom. xv. 13; xiv. 17.

God holds out to us in His word of grace forgiveness of sins and justification for Christ's sake. That is the sun which daily rises in the heavens, and not only chases away the past night, but ever pursues its course, and lights up the whole day. Although it comes into darkness and is enveloped in thick clouds—nay, although a man may shut out its light from himself with closed doors and windows—yet does it remain the same sun, and breaks forth again, that we may continually look upon it again.

The Bible. Many an erudite scholar that has studied the Bible all his life has missed the purpose for which it was given; and many a poor old woman in her garret has found it.

Sir Bartle Frere wrote: 'Missionaries are frequently startled by discovering persons, and even communities, who have hardly ever

seen or heard an ordained missionary, who have nevertheless made considerable progress in Christian knowledge, obtained by means of haphazard circulation of tracts and portions of Scripture.

'In an instance, which I know was carefully investigated, all the inhabitants of a remote village in the Deccan had abjured idolatry and caste, removed from their temples the idols which had been worshipped there time out of mind, and agreed to profess a form of Christianity which they had deduced for themselves from a careful perusal of a single Gospel and a few tracts. These books had not been given by any missionary, but had been casually left with some clothes and other cast-off property by a merchant, whose name even had been forgotten, and who, as far as could be ascertained, had never spoken of Christianity to his servant, to whom he gave at parting these things with others of which he had then no further need.'

THEY overthrew the Bible a century ago, in Voltaire's time. 'In less than a hundred years,' said Voltaire, 'Christianity will have been swept from existence, and will have passed into history.' Infidelity ran riot through France, red-handed and impious. A century has passed away. Voltaire has 'passed into history,' but his old printing-press, it is said, has been used to print the Word of God, and the very house where he lived is packed with Bibles, a depôt for the Geneva Bible Society.

Thomas Paine thought he had demolished the Bible; but after he had gone despairingly to a drunkard's grave in 1809, more than twenty times as many Bibles have been produced and scattered through the world than had been produced since the creation of man. Up to the year 1800, from four to six million copies of the Scriptures, in thirty different languages, was the total of production since the world began.

Eighty years later, in 1880, the statistics of the eighty different Bible Societies now in existence gave a total of 165,000,000 Bibles and Testaments and portions of Scripture, with 206 translations, distributed alone since 1804, to say nothing of the unknown millions circulated by private publishers throughout the world.

A BOOK that has had such a past as the Bible will also have a future.—*Tholuck.*

THE Prince of Grenada, heir to the Spanish throne, imprisoned by order of the Crown, was kept in solitary confinement in the old prison of Skulls, Madrid. After thirty-three years in this living tomb death came to his release, and the following, amongst other remarkable researches taken from the Bible, and marked with an old

nail on the rough walls of his cell, told how the brain sought employment through the weary years:—

Acts of Apostles xxvi. is the finest chapter to read.

Psalm xxiii. is the most beautiful chapter in the Bible.

John xiv. 2, vi. 37, Matt. xi. 28, and Ps. xxxvii. 4 are the four most inspiring promises in the Bible.

Isaiah lx. 1 is the verse for new converts to study.

All who flatter themselves should learn Matt. vi.

Every one should learn Luke vi. (20 to end).

Dean Hook used to say that the best thing to read when the mind is morbid is the only book which is without a fault—the Bible: the four Gospels without note or comment.

After Henry the Eighth's rupture with the Pope the following order was issued to counteract if possible, the advance of sacerdotal superstition: 'Every parson or proprietary of every parish church within this realm shall provide a book of the whole Bible, both in Latin and in English, and lay the same in the quire, for every man that will to read and look therein; and shall discourage no man from reading any part of the Bible, but rather comfort, exhort, and admonish every man to read the same, as the very Word of God and the spiritual food of man's soul.'

Bible Study. Suppose one of those old Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century had been led into some of those rich Mexican treasure-houses, where all round him were massive bars of gold, and gleaming diamonds, and precious stones, and had come out from the abundance with sixpence-worth in his palm, when he might have loaded himself with ingots of pure and priceless metal! That is what some of us do. When Jesus Christ puts the key of His storehouse into our hands, and says to us, 'Go in and help yourselves,' we stop as soon as we are within the threshold. We do little more than take some insignificant corner, nibbled off the great solid mass of riches that might belong to us, and bear *that* away.

Bishop Perowne tells that on one occasion when a number of wits among the French Encyclopedists were conversing, the question having been proposed what book each would choose to take with him into prison or exile, if his choice were restricted to one, all exclaimed, 'The Bible.'

A few years since, in a fearful gale on Christmas-eve, an old man-of-war's man and his wife, who lived in a lighthouse constructed

on wooden piles driven into the sand, were awoke by the violence of the storm. The whole place rocked and shook through and through, as if each wave would be its destruction. . . . There seemed scarcely a hope of safety. In the midst of the tempest these people *had one comfort*—the Bible! . . . The wife only could read; and putting her mouth close to her husband's ear, for the roaring of the storm, she read to him from God's Word, expecting every moment to be their last. . . . So they continued till morning broke and the storm ceased.

INTENSE study of the Bible will keep any writer from being *vulgar* in point of style.—*S. T. Coleridge.*

THE REV. CHARLES VINCE, of Birmingham, told the following incident at a meeting of the Bible Society, in 1863:—

The Hill-top Auxiliary, in 'the Black Country,' determined to send round two or three Christian men every Saturday evening, with packages of Bibles, to visit the public-houses, and persuade the miners and puddlers of the district, while they had their money, to spend some part of it in buying the Word of God. While they were carrying out this plan, a miner said: 'Wouldn't it be a good thing for us to have a copy to read down in the pit at dinner-time?' The proposition met with general approval, and they agreed to buy a copy for this purpose. Of the first copy handed to them, the landlord said the print was too small to read down in the pit, and offered to give a shilling towards the cost of a better type. This was bought, and one of the men said with great simplicity: 'If we have the Bible at dinner-time, we mustn't have no swearing.' This, too, was carried, and a fine imposed upon the man that should break the rule. Is there any other book in the world that you could carry into the company of men and make them say, 'If we open this, and begin to look at it, we must begin to put away some of our sins'?

KARL PHILIPP SPITTA, the great German hymn-writer, said: 'The night conceals the morning too long from me, when I may sit before the Bible and draw water from the living rock, Jesus.'

LOOK out in a wintry night: at first you see only a few glittering stars, but as you continue to gaze, thousands will burst upon your view. So with regard to the reading of the Bible: at first merely a superficial view of its beauties and comforts, but as you continue to read, thousands and thousands of before unknown gems will shine forth from the Word of Life.—*Anon.*

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

'If I have succeeded in any measure,' wrote Ernst Moritz Arndt, whose pious and patriotic songs did as much as the sword to deliver Germany from the despotism of Napoleon, 'in speaking, discoursing, and writing in German, I owe it chiefly to the habit, formed early in childhood, and kept up ever since, of diligently reading Luther's version of the Bible.'

Of all books in the world, the Bible is one which will not yield up its riches and its sweetness except to the diligent and faithful and earnest student. All great works demand long and patient and persevering study. The lesser mind cannot expect to grasp at once the purpose of the greater. Sir J. Reynolds tells us of the profound disappointment with which he first beheld Raphael's great picture of the Transfiguration at the Vatican. It was only as he came again and again, only as he lingered over it and dwelt upon it till the picture took possession of him, that he at last perceived its grandeur and its harmony.—*Perowne.*

A German peasant girl was for some years in the habit of marking the passages in her Bible that particularly struck her, but she afterwards observed that her marks had become useless, for she found all the words to be precious, and worth marking, as they were applicable either to herself or others.

Some one remarked to a Masuto that Christianity might be only an invention of the white man, but the latter replied: 'White men are indeed very clever; they make rolling houses, guns and powder, they are masters of everything but death; yet, for all that, I do not believe them clever enough to have made the Bible.'

Proceeding from the Spirit of God, it is fully understood *only* by the Spirit, even as it can only be explained and applied by the Spirit. To those who are called and waiting, it opens its mysteries; while to the hardened and the sinner it proves a closed book, as it were with seven seals.—*Lange.*

'I hope,' wrote Sir David Brewster to (Principal) James D. Forbes, 'that you will devote yourself to the most extraordinary of all subjects, one which infinitely surpasses the mechanism of the heavens, or the chemistry of the material world—the revelation of your duty and the destiny of man, as contained in the Bible, a book which occupied the best hours of Newton, of Locke, and of Euler.'

One day (said the pioneer-colporteur of the Alleghanies) a man

entered my room, wearing a hunting-shirt and moccasins, with a gun in his hand, and a long knife hanging to a belt at his side, and asked me if I was the man that gave books to the poor people in the mountains. I told him I was engaged in that business. 'Well,' said he, 'we live in an out-of-the-way place, where we have neither schools nor preaching; and we met together last Sunday, to see if we could not raise a Sunday-school, and teach our children to read, but all the books we could find was one New Testament; and some one said there was a man that was giving books to the poor, and so I have come to see you about it.' I gave him all the light I could as to forming and conducting a Sunday-school, and added twenty Testaments with fifty small volumes of Tract Society books, and some tracts. He soon had them all in the bosom of his hunting-shirt, and I have seldom seen a happier man. The next Sabbath the school was started. In six months a church was organised, and soon after a little church built, and a man of God was preaching to them once each month. That bosomful of books was the means God blessed to this result.

César Malan often said that it was the Holy Scripture which directly enlightened his soul, and he traced his dependence upon it largely to 'the finger of Haldane' pointing, when any matter was discussed, to some plain text of Scripture, with the question, 'How is it written?' or, 'How readest thou?'

A monk named Musmeci, in the island of Sicily, was in or about 1872 converted through reading the Scriptures, without any teaching from others. He immediately, in dependence on the Lord for pecuniary support, commenced a work at Messina, and gathered out a small congregation, which was taken up by a Waldensian minister. Signor Musmeci then proceeded to Syracuse, where he raised a small evangelical church, without support from any denomination.

'One day,' said Dr. Moffat, 'as I was passing by the hut of one of the most important but least attentive of my Sunday hearers, this exclamation, "Oh, what a misfortune!" pronounced by a man's voice, struck my ear. Quite concerned, I pushed the door and went in. "What is the matter, Tamra?" I said; "what misfortune has happened to you? I hope neither your wife nor your son is ill, my poor friend." "No," replied he, "there is no one ill in the hut." "Well, what trouble were you speaking of in such a melancholy tone?" The man scratched his woolly head with an embarrassed air, "Why, the boy has just come to tell me that my dog has eaten a leaf of the Bible that you gave us." "Oh, well," I said, "that mischief is not irreparable; I can perhaps replace the leaf." "Ah, but," said the man,

"my dog is spoiled! He will never more fetch me the smallest bit of game, nor will he fly at the throat of my enemy when I tell him to. He will become as gentle as a lamb, as all our warriors do now, who read that book! I tell you what, missionary, my dog is ruined, and it is your fault."'

Professor George Wilson said in one of his letters to his friend Dr. Cairns: 'I spent this forenoon reading the story of Joseph and his brethren, onwards to the end of Genesis. It is long since I read it through, and though no part of the Bible is better known to me, or more tenderly remembered in connection with happy childhood (perhaps, indeed, for that very reason), it moved me almost to tears. I felt the *hysterica passio*, the gulp in the throat, and should have fairly wept had I attempted to read it aloud. The dignity, simplicity, and pathos of the scene have never, I imagine, been excelled, and the wonderful way in which the old romantic story momentarily reveals God Himself, shaping all its events to the most important but far distant issues, and yet leaves the human interest in the tale to go forth unchecked by the awe or even sense of the supernatural, struck me to-day as it never did before. I spent two hours, which fleeted away, in reading the account and thinking over it.'

Third Sunday in Advent

Scriptures Proper to the Day

EPISTLE	1 COR. IV. 1-5.
GOSPEL	S. MATT. XI. 2-10.
FIRST MORNING LESSON	ISA. XXV.
FIRST EVENING LESSON	ISA. XXVI. OR ISA. XXVIII. 5-19.
SECOND LESSONS	ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMONS

The Resurrection

Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. ISAIAH XXVI. 19.

AM inclined to think that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body,—I mean the resurrection of the body as distinguished from the general idea of future life,—is a truth which most of us value more in reference to those we love than in regard to ourselves.

I do not know that persons, generally, are so attached to their own bodies, that it is any particular pleasure to feel that they shall have those bodies again in another state. Perhaps it may be felt amongst us, that we do not appreciate as much as we ought the gift of that particular body which God has assigned to us.

I am mistaken, if to every man the thought of the resurrection of the body of those whom he has loved is not most comforting. That body is dead, the thought of it lies in his most sacred memories; and the anticipation of seeing that body again gives a distinctness and a vividness to the meeting, in another world, which would never be carried to the mind without it.

To have loved a face very much—to have associated with that countenance the deepest thoughts of your life, and the sympathies of many years—to have read, again and again, its lights and shades,

till the expression of its joy or sorrow became a part of your very heart,—to have been so familiar with that form that you could not separate the idea of your own being from the presence of it; and then to have that taken away—that is the time to know what the resurrection of the body is.

Ever so it is, as life goes on, God's truths become more precious to us. It may be, that a last illness will make us think more of the resurrection of our own body. We can all enter into the reason why the prophet chose that order—'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.'

The passage, however, is very mystical; and it may be a much higher than Isaiah that speaks: for 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'; and then the words will contain the deepest evangelical meaning. 'Thy dead men shall live,' Christ says to His Church. And why? What are the means? How is the process? 'Together with My dead body shall they arise.'

Now mark the great truth that argument contains. The natural body of the Lord Jesus Christ rose this day visible upon the earth; but that visible body was the symbol of another body, as real, but invisible.

Of that body Christ is the Head, and all His are the members. All those members, that is, all believers, had died and been crucified with Jesus; they went through their punishment in Him. God saw them there. He will treat them at the last day, as those who have been there. He will pardon them, as those who have gone through their sentence, and paid their penalty. And in the same way, and in the same degree, all believers were raised in the Lord Jesus Christ when Jesus rose. They were in His mind at that moment. They could not have risen if they had not been there. They owe their resurrection to that union. God in His eternal purpose saw them rising there. They could not be in Christ, and not have risen then—so that the future of their resurrection is to them as a fact in history. 'Thy dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise.'

So, even of the resurrection, the dearest part is that we rise 'with Him.' From the moment that you gave yourself to Him, you might say, He gave Himself for you. . . . Joy and sorrow, life and death, the grave, the intermediate state, the resurrection morning, and then the vast eternity. He has written upon it all, 'with Me.' The precious deposit, which you have at this moment laid somewhere, in its quiet resting-place, your own body, when it shall be present with God. It is enshrined in the body of Christ. 'Thy dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise.'

And whence is that rising? Whither is that rising? How is that rising? I know not. But such as Christ's dead body was to His Father, so is that dead body that I have loved and valued; and where

Christ's dead body has risen, there that body that I have loved and valued rose, and there shall I rise.

It would be very rash to attempt to fathom the abysses of the tomb. I think there is reason to suppose that the intermediate condition, both of the body and the soul, between death and life, is characteristically a state of rest, in distinction from, and preparation for, that higher position of service to which it is leading.

The whole history of a Christian, from his death to the second advent, appears to me to be condensed into a wonderfully small compass in one verse, the 2nd verse of the 57th chapter of Isaiah—'He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness'—where you will do well to observe the entire union of rest with motion. No oblivious sleep, no dull unconsciousness, and yet no conflict, and no labour—but they rest without weariness. I can see the body resting on the earth, and the spirit walking 'in his uprightness'; walking with Jesus in that 'uprightness' of which the wise man speaks. God made man upright, before we sought out our many sad inventions!

But our thoughts, to-day, linger with the body. S. Peter tells us that the restored life of the buried body owes itself to the same source as that which is the spring in this world of the life of the dead soul.

The Holy Ghost is made known to us in this as in other of His offices under the emblem of the dew. 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.'

We have indeed steps up to it. . . . The field of nature, the growing seed, the transformed chrysalis, and whatever makes the springtime of the year, all these rather attest the fact than explain it.

We can only follow our illustration. In the hours of the night, when none can watch it, the subtle dew distils, and does its functions, and in the morning each little tendril wakes up in its freshness, the whole region is instinct with animation, and the glistening herbage leaps to a new existence.

So, for a while, the curtain of darkness is spread over you; but behind that veil, how little do we know of the wonderful process which that darkness is shrouding; what still small omnipotent forces may be gathering there; what deep mysteries, down in the depths of the earth, are being enacted there; what marvels are in preparation, ever ready to burst forth.

And when the morning darkness shall break, what a glowing light will spread over us—'Then thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands.' And this will be the note that the archangel's trump rings, 'Awake and sing, ye

that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.'

It has been said that the best test of a man's character is how he wakes up in the morning. Blessed is the man whose happy conscience awakens every day singingly! But what a chorus of sweet melodies will that be, when every saint who has slept awakes to sing. The voices that we heard last, so faint and plaintive, pass along, and how shall we discover them?

And what will be the song? Will it be such as suits the ecstasy of parted souls, when they meet again locked in each other's love; and rapt in the view of each other's loveliness? Or, will it be the echo to the welcome friend? Or, will it be the notes of wonder at the opening glimpse of heaven? Or, will it be higher still, the first chanting of that new song that none can learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth?

Then shall we know what that means—the 'song of Moses and the Lamb.' Whether it be that our saintly being will then delight to sing of the Lord; or whether it will be that earthly joys and earthly sadnesses would blend in one the triumphant strain of Moses on the shore of the sea, where the Egyptian host lay buried, with that touching hymn, the only one, we read, that Jesus ever sang before He went up into the Mount of Olives;—or whether it be the grand concord of all the victories of all the saints under either testament—whatever it be, the 'song of Moses and the Lamb,' we shall know it then, and shall sing it joyfully in one high, universal concert of grateful happiness, while the everlasting doors lift up their heads, and the King of Glory and His living Church go in.

But are there no preludes to the songs of the blest now? Since the last high festival of our Church came round, many sorrows have made some of your hearts to bow as a bulrush, and stoop. You live in the vast memories of an irrevocable past; and as you sit in the heavinesses of your minds, your souls are sore burdened, and you cannot lift them up. But know ye this day that 'the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you with healing in His wings.' 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.'

Is it for you these loved ones are now in the presence of their Creator? Is it for you those mansions are preparing? Is it for you to be alone, when all in earth and heaven is busy with its living sacrifices? High time is it now to shake off the coil, and to go forth to your high privileges of sacred duty.

'For, lo! the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone.' The voice of your risen Lord is speaking to you now—'Rise up, My love, my fair one, and come away.'

J. VAUGHAN,

Fifty Sermons, Second Series, p. 115.

COMPLETE SERMONS

Chastening Times, Waiting Times.

Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee. ISAIAH xxvi. 8.

THERE can be no doubt what the prophet meant by 'the way of Thy judgments.' It cannot mean, according to a frequent use of the word, 'the way of God's commandments'—because in the next verse the same word recurs in a way which shuts it up into a single signification—'When Thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.'

Therefore it must mean 'afflictions'; and the sense of the passage is this, that the path of sorrow is the path to God; and that chastening times are waiting times—'Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee.'

At the same time, very far be it from any of us to say that 'afflictions' and 'judgments' are the same thing. You must remember that it is in God's Word—that is, in the Word of Him who can discriminate and define the exact boundary line where anything begins to assume a judicial character—that particular 'afflictions' are called 'judgments.'

And the very fact that in the Bible itself some 'trials' are especially called 'judgments' and some are not, would lead us to the conclusion that 'trials' and 'judgments' are by no means synonymous.

I would rather ask, 'Is a man ever justified in calling any "visitation" of Almighty God, "judgment"?'

In answer to this question, I would say positively, no man may ever pronounce any evil which happens to his fellow-man a 'judgment' from God!

Who is he that he should place himself in God's seat to declare God's sentence? Has he before him all the knowledge of all the circumstances which must go to make a righteous verdict? Are heavy 'visitations' sent only to the wicked? Do not the like sorrows come to God's own children? Are not 'afflictions' made as often the proof of God's love, as ever they are of His displeasure?

Take care! Do not call them—do not even allow the thought to pass in your mind—that an accident to a fellow-creature is a 'judgment' to that fellow-creature!

Our Lord was at pains to condemn and crush that spirit, to which there is so often a tendency in the human heart. 'Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above

all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'

The question becomes a more difficult one, when we ask, 'Are we right in considering "affliction," which falls upon ourselves, as "judgment"?' And here we must speak and think thoughtfully and accurately.

Troubles, which fall on nations, or on any large collected body of people, are generally, in the Bible, treated as 'judgments.' This was the case in the instance of the text. The Old Testament is full of them. In the New Testament, we have at least the destruction of Jerusalem as an example.

Perhaps we are always safe in taking general affliction as a sign of the displeasure of Almighty God against us all, to call us to universal repentance and general obedience.

But it is evident the case is different with an individual. That there are instances in which individual suffering is punishment, there can be no manner of doubt.

The disobedient prophet, who was killed upon his journey, died judicially.

S. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of sickness, and death, and other evils, as retributive; and he speaks of them as retributive only upon the heads of those who sinned. . . .

But, on the other hand, our Lord treats affliction not as retributive nor retrospective at all, but only as prospective—to produce good, and to bring out the glory of God—in that too-little considered passage, when some, having asked concerning a blind man, 'Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' He made answer, 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.'

And in the case of Job, although his accumulated griefs and difficulties were plainly designed to make him, and did make him, and ceased immediately they had made him, a humbler man—with a deeper sense of his own unworthiness and vileness—yet no one can read the early part of the book of Job, and say his trials were judicial, that is, as 'judgment.'

The best way is to deal with this matter practically.

When you are called to pass under the heavy hand of God, the first thing which you should do is to pray that God will show you whether the 'affliction' is 'judgment'—whether there is any 'root of bitterness' anywhere in your life and heart, which, 'springing up,' produces this sorrow—as the cause produces the effect.

Then, act with that prayer, by examining more closely than ever your own real state before Almighty God. If, as is very probable, if the examination and the prayer leave prominent upon your mind

some distinct and marked transgression—whether in omission or commission—whether overt wickedness or some more secret habit of sin—whether in general worldliness and selfishness, and pride and temper, or in some special act by which the Spirit of God has lately been grieved with you—as was the case, for instance, with David's child—then, I do not say, at once conclude that that affliction is altogether a 'judgment' upon that sin, but in your mind connect the two: let the affliction act back upon the point where you have discovered the wrongnesses—regard it as 'a rod' to that sin, and 'hear the rod'; humble yourself in it; deal with it; take it to Christ; get it forgiven. Bring the influences of the Holy Ghost to bear upon it—be resolute to mark and overcome it; and, in any case, take at once some step to stay it. So God's dispensation in you will have been fulfilled: the remedy will meet the disease: 'in the way of God's judgments you have waited for Him'; and, 'waiting,' when He comes, as He will come, the sin will be so lost in the mercy, that the sorrow will be swallowed up in the joy.

But, if the Spirit of God show you no such special reason why He has been afflicting you, do not be anxious, as if you had sinned in not discovering more guilt—leave it—leave the past, look only to the future; regard the sorrow, as you might regard the knife which the pruner puts into the tree—see it as discipline—expect good to come out of it—ask God that you may see what good is in it. Be as 'clay in the hands of the potter'—for this very purpose that you may be moulded. Act absolutely. Leave it in God's hand. And so you will have trod equally well the dark valley. The way is quite clear—for 'in the way of God's judgments you have waited for Him.'

Leaving, however, the question of the judicial character of any of God's dispensations, let me examine a little more closely, what it is to 'wait for God in the way of His judgments'; and the expression appears to me to convey two ideas—dependence and expectation.

The first thing you have to do, in any affliction, is to recognise it as coming from God only. This is sometimes quite easy; but the duty is equally great when there are circumstances which make it difficult, because they cannot connect it with human instrumentality. I know nothing more beautiful, more filial, more religious, than when a man, called to pass through some mysterious trial—which seems the result of human accident—at once sees nothing, knows nothing, allows nothing, but the hand, the counsel, the love of his heavenly Father!

The very signification of that thought is peace, and the concentration of that thought is piety.

The providence has wellnigh wrought its end, when the mind can once really throw itself into the spirit of those words—'The Lord

gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

From this it will not be a difficult step to that warning, which every sorrow was meant to teach. It seems as if it said to you—'You have lived too independent of Me. You have found happiness and strength in others more than Me. You have never leaned enough upon Me.'

To go back then, and lean on God only—to feel that there is nothing safe but in Him—to find very little left upon earth worth living for but Him—to draw closer to Him—to hang on Him—this is the lesson to be learned; and thus to give the tracings all to God only, and then the restings only on Him, is dependence. 'In the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee.'

But then 'waiting' is more than dependence—it is expectation. As soon as ever you enter into trouble, settle it with yourself that God is going to do some great thing—that He is about to reveal Himself to you in a manner that He has never done before—that He is about to interpose nevertheless for you in a manner that He has never done before—that He is about to use you in a manner that He has never done before. For what is every circumstance, but God making an empty place that He may fill, and a clear way that He may work?

Therefore do not doubt that the sad event is the pioneer to some large good thing coming. Look out for special dealings of God. Believe that He is going to act wondrously with you.

But shall I leave it there, in that general language? No. What would be a Jew's idea of the words, 'We have waited for Thee'? Would it not have reference to the expected Messiah? Were they not always in the Old Testament, but especially in their afflictions, looking for Him as their great Deliverer? And think you not, when the Jews were oppressed and humbled to the dust, by the Assyrians and Babylonians, the more pious minds, looking more longingly down the pages of their prophecies, would gaze for the great Desire of Israel? and would not that be what it meant, 'In the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee'?

And shall the Christian do less? Wait for Christ—a present Christ—to receive Him into your heart, while He knocks—to accept His washing, His comfortings, His hallowings—and watch more for Christ's coming in His glory.

Are not all these things heraldings? Is not this world made uncertain for this very end? Is not the scene dark about you, that it may break in the dawn of the Second Advent? Therefore lift up the head, and stretch out the neck, that you may say, 'In the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee.'

In our own lives there are often warnings which remind us that God's judgments are unsleeping. Though for many years we seem

left alone, yet at last His hand is laid upon us. It may be that some affliction overtakes us by which our pride is humbled in its highest boast. The voice of God speaks loud and sharp; and a direct and solemnised sense of Divine visitation enwraps our mind.

How is it with us, then? What is our state before God? We are gay, fashionable, dissipated. We have received much, and we have rendered little. We have 'drawn iniquity with the cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.'

But God has drawn nigh to us in the way in which He is wont. The fallings of His hand are the tokens of His presence.

And what shall we do? Let us, collectedly and individually, deal with the deep moral sources of the evil. Let us live more 'righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world'—bringing our religion into common things, as those who are living for God—for 'in the midst of life we are in death.'

Let us endeavour, each one of us, to give some practical token of repentance, obedience, and love. And, with Christ more in our hearts, and with eternity always in view, let us so gather the blessing, which comes shrouded with curse; and carry the testimony of our common conscience along with us when we say, 'Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee.'

J. VAUGHAN,
Fifty Sermons, 2nd Series, p. 376.

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Mysteries of God.

Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 1 CORINTHIANS iv. 1.

I. THE question presents itself, What were the distinctive functions of the Christian ministry in the early Church? And to gain a satisfactory answer to this question, we must in all honesty consult the New Testament itself as to the primitive idea of the ministry and the terms used to describe its office, and not allow ourselves to be entangled in the technical phraseology which a later theology, not always adhering to the primitive idea, but overlaying it by false analogies, and subsequently by ambitious assumptions of lordship

over God's heritage, introduced. Approaching the question then in the first instance from the negative side, we may ascertain that the books of the New Testament distinctly abstain from employing for the new ministry of the Christian Church the language which had been used in the Old Testament to describe the ministers of religion of the Mosaic system. Christian ministers are never in the New Testament called priests (ἱερεῖς), that is, if we are to adopt the definition given by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'persons taken from among men, ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that they may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.' The term ἱερεύς, or sacrificial offerer, is repeatedly employed of the heathen priests, and of the Jewish priests, but never of Christian officers. There is one remarkable passage, where by a remarkable antithesis, S. Paul describes Jewish priests as performers of sacrifices (*οἱ τὰ ἱερὰ ἐργαζόμενοι, οἱ τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ προσεδρεύοντες*), and attendants at an altar, but Christian ministers as preachers of the Gospel (*οἱ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον καταγγέλλοντες*). Wherever the idea of priesthood in its sense of ἱερατεία is recognised as having place in the Christian Church, it is applied to all Christian people, and not to the authorised officers specially. Jesus Christ has made them all kings and priests to God and His Father. All form a spiritual priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ—these spiritual sacrifices are prayers, praises, thanksgivings, or on another side they are 'ourselves, our souls and bodies,' the rational not material offering, and the whole congregation of Christian people have a full right, as well as a bounden duty, to offer these.

It is no answer to this unquestioned phenomenon in the New Testament to say that while the Temple was still standing and the Mosaic dispensation had not received its final abolition in the fall of Jerusalem, to guard against confusion, Christianity abstained from using the old technical terms of the system out of which it had its birth. The allegation itself is not true, for in churches where there was at first a predominant Jewish element, the old terms of 'elders' and 'synagogue' were freely used. There is a difference of principle in the two systems. The new covenant has replaced the old, which having fulfilled its function in the religious development of the world had vanished away. A society pre-eminently moral and spiritual in its presentation of religion was to succeed to one which was adapted to the childhood of the world in being mainly external and ceremonial.

II. This determination of the negative side of the Scriptural doctrine of the ministry enables us to proceed with advantage to the positive side. And there we find ourselves almost embarrassed by the multitude of terms which are used as descriptive of ministerial

functions. They who are in a position of authority over their brethren are called messengers, ambassadors, shepherds, teachers, preachers of the word, rulers (ἡγούμενοι), overseers (ἐπίσκοποι), ministers, stewards. Each term represents some varying aspect of the Christian officers, and suggests to them corresponding duties. Let us take by way of illustration the two conceptions which are contained in the passage which I read as the text. 'Let a man,' says the Apostle, speaking in his own name and in name of his fellow-labourers, such as Apollos, 'so account of us as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.' The words as first written were intended to protest against an exaggerated estimate of Christian ministers. The Corinthians, ranging themselves under the watchword of favourite party leaders, had been crying out with schismatical bigotry, 'I am of Paul, I of Peter, I of Apollos,' as if Paul, and Peter, and Apollos had been founders and originators of schools of Christian doctrine, holding in theology a position analogous to that of Plato, or Epicurus, or Zeno in philosophy. S. Paul is indignant against this complete misunderstanding of the unique dignity of Christ, and protests against the elevation of the servant above the master. He and his fellow-teachers are only ministers (διάκονοι, ὑπήρεται) of Christ. Christ is the great Lord. They are only stewards (οἰκόνομοι), Christ is the owner and master of the house. But we are justified in regarding S. Paul's language apart from the original point of view which called it forth, and taking it in its wider significance. And then it serves to glorify the ministry as well as to abate its inordinate pretensions. They who hold pre-eminent authority in the Church are subordinate officers of Christ. They hold then a commission from Him. On behalf of Christ they have intrusted to them a ministry of reconciliation, entreating their fellow-men to be reconciled to God by repentance from past sin and faith in Jesus Christ, by whom they have been reconciled to God, they are to set forth Christ as wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, they are to hold Him up to the eyes of men as the Redeemer from sin and the model of godly life, they are to endeavour to make every man perfect in Christ Jesus, and by a noble proselytism to induce men to be Christians by being Christlike. To promote life in Christ is the very object of their service among men. Again, they are 'stewards of the mysteries of God.' Here too we must refuse to allow the later adoption of a term in a precise technical sense to obscure our apprehension of its original meaning. We know that in later times mysteries became in the Eastern Church the technical name for what the Western Church called the Sacraments. But there is little, if any, trace of that meaning of the word in the New Testament. Mysteries there are, truths which have been hitherto unknown, but are now communicated.

They are doctrines to be revealed, manifested, spoken, published, not rites to be administered. The doctrines of the call of the Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews and the consequent universality of the Church, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, all that centres round the transcendent person of Christ, these are the mysteries of the New Testament. By dispensing these as good stewards the Christian teachers are to bring the world 'to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' The language of S. Paul is an echo of the words of Jesus Himself when answering the inquiry of His disciples why He spake in parables unto the multitude, He told them, 'because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.' The teaching office of the ministry seems to be symbolised by such designations of them as *διάκονοι*, *διδάσκαλοι*, *οἰκόνομοι*, and in a certain measure *ποίμενες*, for the food with which they have to supply their flock, no less than the food which, according to the other metaphor, they had as faithful stewards to distribute to their master's household in due season, is no other than the wholesome Word of God, the doctrine of the Gospel. They have also a ruling and governing office in the spiritual kingdom. They minister discipline, they admit or exclude, they are a legislative body, whose consent is necessary in defining rules of faith or discipline. It is to this function that belong such titles as rulers (*ἡγούμενοι*) and overseers (*ἐπίσκοποι*). By virtue of this they may, without arrogance, describe themselves as heralds or ambassadors of the Invisible Heavenly King, and may inculcate within proper limits obedience from the lay people. The power of Absolution, whatever may be its true nature, belongs to them in virtue of their office as rulers rather than by virtue of their spiritual insight as prophets, as some have thought, and much rather than by virtue of any distinctive priestly character. Even in the Old Testament it is the prophet, not the priest, who pronounces on the penitent king the absolution, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die.' And the Church of the early centuries bore testimony to this connection of Absolution with rulership by reserving to the bishop, as supreme ruler in each diocese, the power of reconciliation to the Church and to God. With regard to the administration of the great sacraments of the Gospel, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, an important difficulty arises, because it seems impossible to discover in the New Testament itself any express provisions as who are to be these lawful administrators of the Divinely instituted ordinances. The command to baptize was clearly not understood as limiting the administration of that initiatory rite to Apostles, for Philip the Deacon, and Ananias of Damascus, who, so far as we know, was neither apostle nor deacon, but only a lay disciple,

baptized. At the institution of the Eucharist the words prescribing the perpetual celebration of that holy rite were spoken to the Apostles as representatives of the whole Church, and, as S. Paul in commenting upon them explains, the whole body of believers are fulfilling the original injunctions of the Redeemer by eating the bread and drinking the cup, and he also implies that the whole body of the communicants bless (εὐλογεῖν) the cup and break the bread. Whether there was any express enactment on these points in the earliest apostolic times we cannot say. No doubt the usages of the Churches by common consent would practically recognise a rule of order and propriety, and authorise the ordained ministry to be the ordinary administrators of sacraments. Hence it became a practical canon that the bishop, or presbyter, should baptize, and only in their absence the deacon. But the rule was not absolute. In cases of necessity a layman, even a woman, could baptize. The Holy Communion could be consecrated only by a bishop or presbyter, and there is no evidence of any variation from this restriction. But it is insufficient to quote canons which determine the rule of ordinary church life as if they indisputably afforded the judgment of the Church as to extraordinary cases of emergency which might arise when whole companies of Christian people were, by no fault of their own, without the presence of an ordained minister. The judgment of charity would be sanctioned, in the absence of any express command of the New Testament, by the spirit of Christianity rather than by any strict letter of Church order. All would admit that ordinarily the pastors of the churches are the authorised dispensers both of the Word and of the Sacraments.

III. The purport of all this investigation in which we have been engaged is not to disparage the Sacraments, the blessed instruments of grace which Christ ordained for the perpetual benefit of His Church, but to determine the central idea of the Christian ministry. This appears to be the proclamation of the word of the Gospel, with all its vivifying and manifold applications to the intellects, and hearts, and consciences of men, rather than an administration of an external ceremonial and ritual. It is a high spiritual and moral mission from Christ, with which the ordained officers of the Church are charged. A lofty ambition may well inspire them the more intensely they realise their vocation 'to preach the word, to be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine,' 'to preach Christ, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus,' to be 'ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.'

W. INCE,

Oxford and Cambridge Journal, Jan. 31, 1878.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Righteous Judgment.

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come. 1 CORINTHIANS iv. 5.

ALMOST in its earliest days, and very unfortunately for its highest interests, the Church of Corinth was largely turned into a school of ill-natured criticism. There were several parties in in it, each claiming the authority and sanction of a great name, one even, with more audacity than reverence, claiming the most holy Name of all. 'One saith, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.' Each party was occupied in finding what fault it could or dared with the names appealed to by the others; and thus three of the parties, or some of them, taunted those who clung especially to the name of S. Paul with the suggestion that their much-loved Apostle after all was not faithful. He might be an active teacher and organiser, he might be a person of great versatility and resource, a great letter-writer, an ingenious disputant: all these they were not prepared to deny, but he had one capital defect,—he was not faithful. He was wanting, they maintained, in that sincerity of purpose which is indispensable in a public servant of Christ. Now S. Paul deals with this charge in that paragraph of his letter to the Corinthian Church which is selected for to-day's Epistle. People had better, he says, think of himself, and, indeed, of all the Apostles, not in their personal capacity, but as being, by their office, ministers of Christ, and stewards of His sacraments. No doubt a steward must be before all things faithful; but whether the Corinthians or any other men think him, Paul, faithful or not, matters, he says, very little to him, since he does not venture to decide even for himself whether he is, or is not, faithful. His conscience, indeed, reminds him of nothing that obliges him to think himself unfaithful; but then he remembers that this does not of itself prove him to be faithful, since he does not see very far, and he is judged by One who knows more than he knows—who, in fact, knows all. Therefore the Corinthians had better give up their habit of thus judging either himself or other men; 'let them judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.' Now, this precept against judging others often occurs in the Bible. It is prominent in the teaching of our Lord Himself. 'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.' And S. Paul himself warns the Romans, 'Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest,' and he asks: 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.' And he presently adds: 'Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more;

but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.' These, after all, are only samples of the passages which bear on the subject, and which will readily occur to you.

I. Now, what is the exact force and import of this precept? Is it meant that we are to form and express no judgment whatever upon human conduct, upon what we see and hear of in the world around us? This it would seem cannot possibly be meant, and for more reasons than one. The first reason is that many judgments of the mind, if not of the lips, are inevitable for all of us if we think at all, what is the process that is going on within every human being every day from morning to night. Is it not something of this kind? Observation is perpetually collecting facts and bringing them under the notice of reason, reason sits at home at the centre of the soul, holding in her hands a twofold rule or law, the law of truth and the law of right. As observation comes in from its excursions, laden with its stock of news, and penetrates, thus laden, into the presence-chamber of reason; reason judges each particular, judges it by the law of right if it be a question of conduct, judges it by the law of truth if it be a question of faith or opinion. In a very great number of cases the laws of truth and right as held by the individual reason are very imperfect laws indeed. Still, reason does the best she can with them, and goes on, as I say, sitting in her own court and revising judgments from morning till night. Probably two-thirds of the sentences we utter, when closely examined, turn out to be judgments of some kind, and if our mental and moral natures are at all alive, judgments of some kind issue from us just as naturally as flour does from a working corn-mill. If the moral sense is alive, if the moral nature is sound, it must judge, not with a parade of declamation against the vice of other days or other classes than our own, but with the short, sharp result of expression of utter antipathy to that which is in contradiction with this governing law; not to do this, I say, is to capitulate to the forces of evil, it is to cancel the law of right within us.

II. What, then, is the Apostle's exact meaning when he bids the Corinthians 'judge nothing before the time'? The point is, what does he mean by nothing—what is the class of judgments no one of which is permitted to a Christian? Some of the Corinthians, let us remind ourselves, were saying that the Apostle himself was not faithful, was not sincere. If they had merely said that he did not teach the truth, he would have argued the matter out with them, as he did the Judaisers in Galatia. As it was, they undertook to decide what was the character and worth of his motive, and therefore he bids them judge nothing—that is, nothing of this purely internal

character 'before the time, until the Lord come.' Our Lord would drag bad motives from their obscurity. Our Lord would bring to light the hidden things of darkness. Our Lord would show in the full light of day the real motives upon which all before His throne had acted. Our Lord would make manifest the counsels of the heart. It is, then, the judgment of that which does not meet the eye, the judgment of the characters as distinct from acts which is forbidden by our Saviour and His Apostles. If we witness an act of theft, we must say that it is an act of theft, and that Almighty God will punish it. If we are asked to say further what is the moral condition of a thief before God, the answer is by no means so easy. There are serious reasons for our hesitating to give any answer at all, for that thief may be already, like his penitent predecessor of old, preparing for death in earnest, and with a promise of Paradise whispered in the ear of his soul.

One reason which makes it difficult for all of us to judge the characters as distinguished from the acts of other men equitably is this: we are seldom, if ever, without a strong bias ourselves; we have, as the phrase goes, our likes and dislikes, only those men who have a very strong sense of justice try to keep these tendencies well in hand before they speak or act in relation to others.

And another reason which makes the real judgment of our fellow-creatures so difficult is our necessary ignorance of circumstances. If circumstances do not decide our action—and they certainly do not—the human will being what it is, they do, nevertheless, influence it very seriously.

And a third reason is that we see only the outside of life and character in those whom we judge and whom we know, as we think, perhaps, most intimately.

III. 'Until the Lord come.' Yes, only when He comes will there be a judgment at once adequate and universal. Well it is for us that we have not to trust to any of the phrases that are sometimes proffered us as substitutes for the last judgment—a judgment of conscience. 'Until the Lord come.' He can do that which we cannot do; He can judge men as they really are. He has been appointed to judge the world in righteousness because He is what He is—the Sinless Man, and withal infinitely greater. There is no warp in His perfect humanity, whether thought or temper or physical pain, that can for a moment affect the balance of His judgment; there is no sin or weakness to which He has a subtle inclination, or of which He will ever exaggerate the evil; nor is He acquainted with any circumstances that excuse or enhance the guilt of each who stands before His throne. He has had His eye all along upon each one of us, as of old upon the woman of Samaria up to the very

hope, that even round John himself those hopes, that faith, had gathered, and 'all men mused in their hearts' even of John himself, 'whether he were the Christ or not.'

But was He? or that one that followed Him, or another yet to come? That is the question, the crux, for John, for his generation, for all generations, for the whole world, for you and me? 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'

That question is as pressing to-day as it ever was. It grows more pressing as the ages move along, and the centuries place long distances between living men and women, and the Christ of Nazareth and Jerusalem. Spite of that distance, yea, were it lengthened out to twice its span, can we claim finality for Christ and Christ's religion? 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'

II. Whatever John's motive in asking that question, it was from the prison that he asked it; yes, and it is from a prison, many prisons, that men ask it still.

(1) The prison, first of all, of sin. There is no doubt, no mistrust, in those first days of creed and catechism, of faith and prayer, taught by a mother's lips, and commended by a mother's life and a mother's love. But, perchance, there follow days of self-confidence and self-pleasing, of indulgence, of passion, of sin; and the soul, and perhaps the body is imprisoned in the walls of evil habit; and then, left to itself in the loneliness of a life from which God has been expelled, or, if not expelled, lost sight of, lost touch with, in a heart embittered by evil thoughts and abandoned to hatred or ill-will, no wonder that the faith is clouded and the hope dimmed, and the question arises, 'Art Thou He that should come?' Is there anything, after all, in the old creed and the old faith; in prayer, in church, in sacrament? Must we look elsewhere for the satisfaction of this heart whose craving will not be stilled?

(2) Or there is the prison of conventionality—of society. That hard and chilling code that damps ardour and decries enthusiasm, and demands conformity to its own heartless maxim of *nil admirari*, and 'do-as-those-about-you-do.' How many a young man or woman, caught into this cold stream of fashionable apathy, has lost the faith and hope and love of happier and purer days, and fallen away from Him whose service is the only freedom; and out of that chill prison such an one cries to-day, back to the Christ of childhood, of his early prayers and his early faith, 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another.'

(3) Or is it the prison of worldliness? The dull, deadening influences of being well-to-do, of having every whim satisfied; 'eat, drink, and be merry,' as long as it all lasts; and then—then 'to find

the world is vain,' and that the soul, fed with its husks, is but a starving prodigal after all; and out of this famine, in the midst of plenty, to come to cry back to Him, 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'

(4) Yet another prison—the bondage of an enchained mind. The hard, dry calculating spirit that our blessed Lord rebukes in the Gospel. 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' The spirit of Nicodemus, and the Pharisees, 'How can these things be?' 'How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?' The spirit that demands mathematical accuracy in matters of faith, and places its final court of appeal in a man's reason, to the exclusion of his conscience and of his heart. Bound hand and foot with intellectual grave-clothes that wrap round a dead faith, the imprisoned soul cries out to the Christ, who once, if He did not convince the reason, did at least touch the conscience and stir the heart, 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'

(5) Or, last of all, from that other prison which most earnest souls know sooner or later in spiritual experience; in that dull monotony of everyday life, when the first fervour has died down, and the soul is hemmed in on all sides by obstacles that mar its progress and break its peace; when the tide of an early devotion, which once bore it up to the high-water mark of faith and love, seems to have receded, and to have left it stranded there, high and dry, uncared for and unassisted, and the question will come, Was it all real, all worth while? That baptismal grace, that bestowal of the Spirit, that dedication to God, that first Communion with its nearness to the living Christ, its promise of life henceforth in constant union with Him,—what does it all mean? what has it all come to? With the damp and the dulness and the disappointment about us, do we not want to ask just that question of the Baptist, to turn to that same Christ and say, Have we deceived ourselves? was it all a dream, a myth, a beautiful fable? 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'

III. And what is the answer to this oft-repeated question, and how is it to be reached? Surely the course John took was the best course, be it for himself or for his disciples. 'Go to Him,' so he bade them —'go to Himself. Go and ask Him the question and get His own answer.' And they went; they went, and saw and believed. They saw Him heal the sick, and give sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and strength to the lame, and preach the Gospel to the poor.

Can we do better?

E. T. GOUGH.

The Religion of the Son of Man, p. 87.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

The Message of S. John.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, etc. S. MATTHEW xi. 2-6.

THE depth of the agitation and questioning which was taking place in men's minds respecting the character and mission of our Lord is shown by the fact that even John, in his distant prison, was haunted by doubts as to whether this were indeed He that should come. To satisfy these rising doubts he sends two of the disciples who still clung to him in his misfortunes, to put directly the question, 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'

I. It is remarkable that Christ Himself was never in prison. He even taught, persecuted but not silenced, in the thronged courts of the temple, and the places of most common resort. Even His dying words were spoken in public, and listened to by thousands.

Thus though Christ's servants may be imprisoned, Christ Himself is free. Persecution may crush everything else, but it cannot crush Christ. If John is in prison, Christ is free. If Peter be in gaol, and John beheaded, yet a great company of preachers, free to move wherever they please, are penetrating into all the corners of the world, and preaching the Gospel to every creature.

II. It is also instructive to observe that John in prison *doubted* whether Jesus was the Messiah or no. John was only human like ourselves; he had his weak moments, and this was one of them. We need not blame those who ask such questions. Only let us remember that to show them is a sign, not of strength, but of weakness; a mark of blindness, which results from a moral and spiritual impression now.

III. For how shall we answer these questions? We can only answer them as Christ answered the messengers of the Baptist. He pointed to works done before their eyes, all of them distinctly foretold by Isaiah as works to be done by the Messiah, and in effect His answer was, 'If I am not the Christ, who is?' And just so we must answer the modern caviller, 'If this is not the Gospel which the world needs, what is?' If Christianity, with all its imperfections, has yet done, and is doing, so much good, what will you offer us in its place as a moral agent for the regeneration of human nature and human society?

IV. There is a great defect in our common Christianity, for which also a remedy is to be found in the words of Christ to the messengers of John. And the defect is, that we have made our religion too much a class religion, whereas, as Christ preached it, it was emphatically a religion for all classes; and so He declared on this occasion, 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them.' These words are not meant

to exclude the rich. It was taken for granted that *they* were to be preached to. No one who wished to have any influence would overlook them, and as a matter of fact we know that our Lord preached to the rich as well as to the poor. But what He meant was, that the poor who had hitherto been altogether neglected and left out in the cold, should have their share in His teaching. From the new kingdom which Christ came to establish on earth, none would be excluded because polluted in the eyes of men, if only in the sight of God they had penitent and contrite hearts. A. BLOMFIELD,

Church of England Pulpit, vol. iv. p. 75.

The Divinity of Christ.

S. Matthew xi. 2-5.

I. A NON-MIRACULOUS Christianity is as much a contradiction in terms as a quadrangular circle; when you have taken away the supernatural, what is left behind is not Christianity. It is not the religion which the Apostles preached, it is not that into which converts were baptized; it is not that for which martyrs gave their lives. There might be differences of enumeration if we were asked to state what were the supernatural facts which we should pronounce essential to Christianity, but on this point we can be agreed, that Christianity requires faith in a supernatural person. For any one who tries to clear away the supernatural from Christianity has got to deal with the question, What think ye of Christ? Did He differ from other men in degree or in kind? Was He, however pre-eminent among His fellows, a man who possibly may, in other ages or other parts of the world, have had His equals, and as time goes on, for ought we know, may have His superior? Or was He a person altogether unique in the history of humanity? Certain it is that nothing less than this is what His Church has always claimed for Him. From the earliest times Christians refused to acknowledge as belonging to their body those who admitted with Jesus sharers in His honour. There were those who set up images of Christ along with those of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and others; but such obtained no recognition as fellow-disciples from the Christian body. And if it was thought a degradation to Christ to place Him on a level with philosophers, still more distasteful to Christians was the project attributed to the eclectic liberality of a half-converted emperor to find room for their Master in a pantheon of heathen divinities. He was not one who would share His glory with another.

II. If that be once conceded, or even admitted as possible, which our faith asserts, namely, that our blessed Lord was a unique Person,

distinct in nature from ordinary men, all difficulties about the admission of which would otherwise be accounted supernatural facts at once disappear. There is in Christianity but one miracle, the appearance in the world of a supernatural person. The Christian miracles form a connected system; it is idle to reject one unless you reject the whole, if one be admitted, all the rest are credible. If the proof of one is unassailable, it avails nothing to raise difficulties about the others. The doctrines of the Church's creed are so connected together that if you remove the article of our Lord's divinity, the remaining articles become not more, but less credible.

III. If we cease to worship Christ as God, I doubt if we shall do well to call ourselves by His name at all. The question is, in short, whether our souls are more likely to be elevated by the worship of God or by creature worship. It is notorious how a man's character is moulded by that of the being whom he worships, or in whom is embodied his highest notions of perfections. Even under the Christian dispensation, when creature cult has been practised under the most favourable circumstances, the effect has not been favourable to morality. It has made the object of worship one who has been indeed acknowledged to be a creature, but in whom men's highest ideal of purity, tenderness, and self-denial has been embodied. Yet as her mercy was supposed to be not limited by justice, she was regarded as one not hating sin as God hates it, one likely to be indulgent to human frailty, and to forgive it on easier terms than the Supreme; and so her office has been looked on as that of shielding the sinner on any terms from punishment, of enabling men to continue in sin with a prospect of escaping with ultimate impunity; and bandits and assassins have found themselves able to continue their trade while paying her the utmost devotion. If God has forbidden us idolatry it is because the most effectual instrument of our moral renovation is communion with Him, who is known to be of spotless purity. It is by contact with God's Spirit that man is sanctified, and we do our souls an infinite injury if, shrinking from God's infinite holiness, we fancy we have found some being higher than man but lower than God, who can shield the soul conscious of guilt from the powerful sense of God's immediate presence. The worship of Christ has done the Church no harm, simply because she has *not* looked on Him as a creature. If it be the perfection of the Christian life to set Christ ever before us, to live as in His sight, to strive to be like Him, and consider how by our actions we shall best please Him, when we say Christ, we mean God. The teacher who leads us from nature to Christ does us infinite service, if by Christ we mean God; if we have been made to feel that in this world we are not the sport of blind forces, which toss us about as chance may order for evil or

for good ; but the objects of love of a Heavenly Father, who has not merely shown His love for our creation and our preservation, but who gave His only Son for us. But if Christ be man, to lead us to Christ is a miserable halting-place. Then to lead us to Christ means this, to arrest the growth of the science of religion at the point at which it arrived eighteen centuries ago ; to throw our thoughts on the past instead of on the future, and to say that at the end of a period when the human intellect has been startled with unexampled activity, when literature and science has been cultivated as never before, we are to be content to sit at the feet of a highly gifted Jewish teacher who died two thousand years ago.

G. SALMON,
Non-Miraculous Christianity, p. 1.

The Witness borne to John the Baptist by our Lord.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, etc. S. MATTHEW xi. 2-6.

AMONG the various instruments used by God for preparing the way for the coming of our Saviour upon earth, and for making ready the hearts of men for His appearance, we all know that John the Baptist stands pre-eminent, inasmuch as he was the immediate forerunner of Christ. It is not, therefore, a matter of surprise to us that our gospel for to-day should direct our thoughts towards him, and such a consideration is a most suitable preparation for a fitting celebration of that great festival which tells of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh. At no time of the Church's year is the testimony of the Baptist to Christ brought so close to us as now, and, as we may remember, that very testimony forms the subject of the gospel for next Sunday.

I. The occasion which presented itself to our Saviour may not appear to us to have been one well calculated for bearing a favourable testimony to John. The Baptist had been thrown into prison for his bold denunciation of Herod's crime. His own prophetic words had very soon come to pass: 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease' (John iii. 29, 30). As soon as he had fulfilled his mission upon earth, God permitted the arms of his enemies to have free scope, and he who had spent the days of his youth and strength in the wilderness was destined to linger out those that remained to him in the loneliness of the dungeon.

John was eminently a man of faith. Faith was as a 'lantern to

his feet and a light to his path,' and he was to close his earthly career in faith. It may well have been expected that things would have been otherwise ordered. He may often have said to himself that when He whom he had announced should appear, immediately the kingdom of God, so long expected and desired, would be established in Israel; and that he who in faith had preached of that kingdom, should close his eyes at the very moment of its appearance.

But the counsel of the Lord had ordered it otherwise. John was to finish his course in faith, as he had begun it. And this evidence of God's will appears to have been a severe test of the Baptist's faith, which brought darkness into his soul. He saw no manifestation of the kingdom of God; above all, there were no such preparations for the establishment of that kingdom as he had expected to see now that the Saviour had come, and the calm equanimity of his mind was shaken. His faith, indeed, was not extinguished, but the light of it was darkened. He did not cease to regard the Saviour as the long promised One, but his certainty of this fact was no longer the free, unwavering living conviction that it had been before; it was the conviction of one who clings to a firm but obscure hope. Yes, John had now to fight the fight of faith; and even the news brought to him by his disciples of the wondrous deeds wrought by the Messiah could not wholly deliver him. They tied the knot of mystery tighter than ever; for though he saw in this Messiah things great and worthy of Him, yet there was not that evidence which he had confidently hoped to see.

And now we see in the Baptist that manly courage which in such a case never fails to make use of the means placed within its reach in order to free itself from harassing doubts. He did not hesitate to send the question which perplexed him straight to Him who alone could send back to him a reassuring answer, and he put it in a way that showed neither pride nor timidity. He sent two of his disciples from his prison to Jesus, and bade them inquire of Him, 'Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'

The question was put as plainly as it could be put, but it did not displease the Lord. On the contrary, He made it an opportunity for bearing a noble testimony to His forerunner, and His answer did him honour in the eyes of the people.

And let us not imagine for a moment that all kinds of doubt are displeasing to our blessed Lord. He has Himself fought the hardest of all battles of faith, and therefore He is able, 'in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, to succour them that are tempted.' There are honest doubts—the doubts of a heart that would fain find light, and cannot—of a really earnest, truth-seeking mind. To such as these God has respect; but the doubts which arise from frivolity,

or moral obstinacy, in a heart that only seeks enlightenment in order that it may hide behind it, are an abomination in His sight; and though man cannot distinguish to which class our doubts belong, His all-seeing eye can pierce us through and through.

John was so highly regarded by the Lord that He would not even appear to teach him or to help him in his conflict. He knew how little was wanting to bring him to a most joyful decision, and He worded His reply accordingly.

The disciples of John had found the Lord of life busied in restoring health to those who were plagued with divers infirmities and evil spirits, and unto many that were blind He had given sight. These were the deeds that had been reported to John in the prison, and which had hitherto failed to unravel his perplexities. Now, by a gentle turn of words the Saviour was about to send light into his soul. 'Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. *And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*'

In these words we can trace a gentle forbearance towards the Baptist. His Lord would not send him a direct answer to his doubts, but rather laid before him the facts by means of which He knew he could find out the answer for himself. So gently does the Saviour of the world deal with His own.

II. Our Lord appears to have borne His testimony to the Baptist immediately after the messengers had gone to take His answer to the imprisoned John, so that He lost no time in vindicating the honour of His forerunner in the eyes of the people.

It is not improbable that many of the messengers went away secretly misjudging the holy Baptist, and in their presumption imagining that he had betrayed a wavering belief in Jesus. How great must their surprise have been when they heard Jesus Himself hold up John as the very pattern of firm faith,—He who needed not that any should tell Him what was in man.

'What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?' was our Lord's opening question, and by His words He meant to infer, 'Ye who imagine that John was mistaken in me, why were ye in your turn offended in him, and why have ye so soon forgotten him whom you lately applauded so loudly?' The answer lay not far off. 'Ye knew not how to value the Baptist's teaching; ye have gone out to *see* him, not to *hear* him, as ye ought to have done. He was a sight worth seeing; and because he stirred up a movement (which was not his intention), ye wished also to have an opportunity for talking to this wonderful man.'

This was a severe rebuke to the people, but it applies still more sharply to the children of this generation, who are well pleased to talk of and criticise that Christ who to them is a stranger, but who will not take the trouble to go out of their way to behold Him, either in Christian hearts and lives, or in His own holy Word.

R. ROTHE,

Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 21.

The Supreme Social Benefactor.

Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see.

S. MATTHEW xi. 3, 4.

THERE are times when the old problems of human life seem to come back upon us more imperiously than ever. We cannot forget, for example, that nigh two thousand years have run their course since the night of the angels' song; and what of our poor world to-day? We look abroad on the boundless sea of nations—what darkness still broods, what countless hearts and homes know nothing of the peace Christ brings—never, in fact, so much as heard that a Saviour for men was born! And thus, after nineteen centuries have come and gone, we are perplexed, we are often dismayed. If the world's Saviour be indeed born, how is the world still thus? And so from our perplexity there goes up to Christ's ear the impatient question of the Baptist, 'Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?'

I. But let us not mistake the drift of the Baptist's question. It was not, as some suppose, that John's faith had now failed, although, indeed, it would not have been surprising if it had. Think what a change had taken place since those days when he was on the pinnacle of fame and popularity, when multitudes flocked from Jerusalem and all Judæa to hear him as he shook men's hearts beside the banks of Jordan, when even Pharisees and Sadducees came to his ministry, and all men mused whether he was the Christ or no. Now he had been for months a prisoner, the victim of the injustice and cruelty of the licentious Herod. Whatever reports might reach him regarding the prevailing corruption and profligacy, his heart could only burn in secret. No words of his could now be heard. There was nothing for him but weary, monotonous days and nights of silence and privation. Who, then, would wonder if in such circumstances a sudden storm of feeling had shaken his convictions to their roots, as when a whirlwind tears up the giants of the forest in its resistless course. But it was not so. Reverse of fortune had not uprooted his faith. With his whole soul

he still believed that He on whom he had seen the Spirit as a dove descend and remain was beyond doubt the divinely-accredited Christ. On this point, indeed, the statement in our narrative is significant. When John had heard in prison the works of Christ, he had no question as to the works being the works of Christ. His perplexity had reference to the works themselves. It was here his difficulty lay. He could not understand Christ's way of working owing to his natural temperament, his Old Testament modes of thought and feeling, and his views of the Messianic predictions. He was astonished to hear of Christ working so lowly and so quietly, and, apparently, in so desultory a manner. Chafed by confinement, he is impatient at such procedure. He resolves to make his voice heard, even from his prison, and to address a stimulating message to his Master. In the tone of one who would fain urge on to more decided action he sends the half-taunting question, 'Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?'

II. It was not unbelief, then, that prompted this question. It was shot forth from a heart full of faith and loyalty, although fired by a mistaken zeal. Like Elijah before him, he had yet to learn that neither the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, but the still, small voice is God's most effective instrument for accomplishing His beneficent designs. And, similarly, as often as we re-echo John's question, and with much of his perplexed despondency, this is not due to unbelief. We know that the Son of God is come. We see God revealed. We have heard the words of eternal life. It is not possible to conceive of a Saviour more able to save, or more willing, or more suited to all men's need; and countless multitudes have found Him to be in very deed the power of God unto salvation. All this we know; and yet the question of eager desire remains, and, like John, we would fain put our question to the Master Himself that He Himself would teach us.

Christ's answer was graciously framed, so as to remind John of Isaiah's prophecy: 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.' So it had been predicted. Let John judge. Was not the fulfilment taking place? Let him thus also understand that, strange as Christ's way of working might seem to him, His method was not merely the choice of His own wisdom, but according to the Divine counsel and will, ages before declared.

III. We are not told what effect this answer produced on John's mind. It may be that, like many another man in a transition period, his thoughts were so bound up with the old and passing order that it was impossible for him to understand or to welcome the new; but we

prefer to think that the answer became to him a Pisgah from which, like Moses, the great founder of the dispensation of which he was the last prophet, he caught some glimpses of the promised inheritance; and, though it was not to be his to enter into the new kingdom, may we not believe that the glimpses given of its true nature shed over his stern and weary spirit during the few weeks that yet remained to him some softening, gladdening hours of heavenly gentleness and grace? But, however this may have been, the point on which it is important we should fix attention is that, in answer to John's perplexed inquiry, *Christ simply pointed to His own method of working*. And is there not too much reason why this should be His answer to us when burdened with a weighty sense of the very partial success of Christianity? As often as we cry in our despair, 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' does He not silently but significantly point to the way in which His own powers were occupied? To a lamentable extent there has been misapprehension and mistake on the part of the Church and of Christian people as to the way of advancing the Divine kingdom. If the Church has done so little in the past it is because it has not walked more closely in the footsteps of Christ. It has forsaken His example for what seemed more direct measures and more immediate results; and in the same degree it has proved ineffective. His intensely human life and intensely human work have been etherealised away into abstract dogmas and theological discussions which leave the great toiling world untouched.

For a thousand years the Man Christ Jesus remained far apart from men's thoughts and hearts; the Virgin, the saints, and priests became their hope; the one true Saviour was no more than a distant name. Nor have more recent times quite freed themselves from the old disastrous mistake. It is still too often true that men cannot see the wood for the trees. The Gracious One is too often hedged about by definitions and dogmas which men can scarce get through, and faith is analysed and elaborated into a very system in itself. Has it never been felt by those of us who are parents that when we try to teach our children regarding Christ, and labour to impress upon them His threefold 'offices of prophet, priest, and king, both in a state of humiliation and exaltation'—has it not occurred to us that our young ones fail to recognise in this abstract theology the living human Christ, who took little children up into His arms and blessed them? The person presented to them is often a mysterious, distant, and awe-inspiring being whom they cannot at all understand. He whom the Gospels present is one to whom their young hearts may run in confidence and love. Let us give thanks that a characteristic feature of the religious thought of our time is a return to the recognition of Christ in His true and tender human life. We are taking our

ideas of His person, not from dogmatic systems, but from His own life on earth. Men are breaking through barriers to get to their Divine Brother's side. He is ceasing to be a distant abstraction; He is becoming ever increasingly a living friend, a helper whose hand we may grasp in ours, and to this we have to trace whatever warmth and glow and aggressiveness belong to our modern Christian life.

W. ROSS TAYLOR,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxviii. p. 341.

The Christian Religion Essentially Supernatural.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.

S. MATTHEW xi. 4-6.

I. THESE words were pronounced in answer to a mission from John the Baptist to the Lord in which the momentous question was put, 'Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' Now, almost every ancient writer, with, I think, one notable exception, has interpreted this fact in the following manner. They say that it is impossible to suppose that John the Baptist entertained any doubt. He had so clearly witnessed for Christ that we dare not cast a doubt upon the integrity of that witness by supposing him to have had occasion to ask a question like this; and, therefore, that it was on account of these disciples, whose faith faltered while his did not, that he sent out of his prison this message to Jesus, and received the answer that I have just read. I am unable to agree with this interpretation. I think that it proceeds from a mistaken idea of protecting and elevating the character of John the Baptist by supposing him to have been exempt from those spiritual trials which every child of man, from the time when one stood under the olives in the Garden of Gethsemane, down to this present hour and moment, has had to go through. Times of high, clear faith are succeeded by times of depression and even of misery; and if I venture to say that John the Baptist put this question because he stood in need of the answer, and stood in need of the answer for himself, I do but say that this great servant of God was a man, and subject to the same spiritual conditions that press upon us all. He wanted the answer, and so he put the question.

II. Look at the answer which was given. We may suppose that these disciples were allowed to see the wonders wrought, and—I think that in S. Luke it is so mentioned—and then this reflection was given to them. 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers

are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' The most notable circumstance in this answer is the way in which things unlike each other seem to be put together. 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk.' These wonders we can suppose to impress the people and the disciples deeply; but in the conclusion—'the poor have the gospel preached to them,'—we have something of a totally different kind and class. There seems to be something unexpected in this turn that is given to the matter, and we are tempted to turn to our commentaries to ask why it is. I am not going to refer you now to any commentary, but I am going to ask you to think for a moment whether there is this real inconsistency. Outside, in the discussions that go on about religion, a great deal is said about the supernatural, and we are invited to consider whether the supernatural or the miraculous has anything to do with the rest of religion,—whether, in fact, we ought not, at the bidding of scientific discoverers, to put aside or into the background all that concerns the supernatural, and then rest entirely upon the moral foundation and the moral results of religion. My answer is drawn from the text. Religion is all of one piece, and that the whole of it is supernatural: and that, in putting together these two things, apparently so separate and so unlike, Jesus is, in point of fact, guiding us to that consideration. The whole of the working of the Son of God amongst the children of men is preternatural, supernatural; and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor, and the rescue of the poor out of their troubles, are as truly miraculous and incapable of being accounted for by the ordinary laws and rules on which men calculate as the making the blind to see, and the giving back to the deaf their power of hearing.

The whole of religion is knit up together. It is supernatural from first to last. The very rudiment and foundation of religion are these, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There is an interruption of the laws of nature, so called; or, rather, there is the interference of a higher nature in the rules and workings of the lower nature, and out of that all the rest shall follow.

ARCHBISHOP THOMSON.

Penny Pulpit, New Series, No. 958.

The Gospel for the Poor.

The poor have the Gospel preached to them. S. MATTHEW xi. 5.

I THINK S. John the Baptist was overwhelmed with despondency when he sent two of his disciples to our Lord to ask, 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' He was in his

loathsome prison at Machæra, seemingly forgotten and deserted. And I for one could quite excuse him if his faith at last failed him, and he fancied he had been the victim of a strange delusion. I know what the old fathers of the Church thought. They for the most part thought he sent the disciples for *their* satisfaction, and not for his own. For, as they argued, how could he who had had such marvellous evidence of the divine mission of the Saviour granted him, who had seen the Dove and had heard the Voice, and who had himself borne such noble testimony to the Lamb of God,—how could he ever doubt? Yet it always seems to me a somewhat unnatural meaning to give to the story to suppose that S. John sent his disciples that they might have their faith confirmed. That at least would not be the first and most obvious sense of the passage. Why that 'Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard'? Why that comment when the messengers were gone, upon the character of S. John, as though to defend him from the charge of murmuring at his rough treatment, or of fickleness and inconsistency, which his message might so easily suggest? 'He is no man of luxury,' our Lord would say, 'such as you might find in a king's palace, unable to bear hardship: he is no waverer, bent hither and thither by each blast of trial and persecution, as might seem from such a question as he has asked.' This seems to me so far more natural an interpretation that I gladly accept it, together with the majority of modern commentators, as being full of comfort to the downcast and despondent. Will any one say that a once steadfast faith can never be sorely tried with doubts and difficulties? Will any one count it a strange thing that over a soul once basking in the sunshine of childlike confidence and serenity there should drift a chill dark cloud of fear and dismay? Nay, I thank God for S. John the Baptist's despondency, as I do for S. Thomas's doubt, for I think they are both meant to bring comfort and help to the doubting and despondent.

But it is with our Lord's answer to the question put to Him that I wish to concern myself to-day, or rather with one part and branch of that answer. Jesus was to show that He was the Messiah. He was to send to His poor suffering despairing friend and cousin a true message of hope and reassurance. He says to the two messengers, 'Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see.' These will cheer him, these will prove that he has not been cherishing some strange illusion, these will show him that whatever his own personal sufferings and perplexities, God's work is being wrought, God's purposes are being accomplished, God's promises are being fulfilled. He will know then that I am He that should come, and that he is not in weakness and weariness to wait and 'look for

another.' A little cloud floats just over our own souls, and we say, 'The sun has ceased to shine in the heavens.' We want a larger outlook, we want a wider view of God's dealings, we want a truer insight into the 'works of the Lord, and His wonders of old.' 'Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see,' and one of these things is this: 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them.'

I. This then is one of the signs that the Son of God has come into the world. There is a Gospel for the poor. These are glad tidings for those who need them most. And of necessity also this is one of the marks and notes of the Church of Christ. She can hardly be a faithful handmaid of the Master who sent such a message to His poor afflicted servant, if it be not true of her that 'to the poor the Gospel is preached.'

II. But now a very serious question presents itself. If the preaching of the Gospel to the poor be so plain a duty of a Church which would follow the example and obey the command of Christ, is it quite certain that we are rightly and fully grasping the meaning of the Gospel which is to be preached, and that we thoroughly understand how to preach it? In a past generation 'the Gospel' was generally assumed to be summed up in a short formula, the embodiment of which in a sermon was made the test of its faithfulness. In the present day we have a considerable variety of Gospels. I have no doubt our forefathers were over-cramped and narrow in their definition of the Gospel. I have as little doubt that we are often over-vague and diffusive. Well, at any rate, a patch of vivid colour will catch the uninstructed eye more readily than a waste of weak and vapid tints. And I am by no means sure that the old formula, which seemed to so many to comprise all they cared to know, 'Jesus Christ came to die for lost sinners: believe in Him and you shall be saved,' had not vastly more power over the consciences and lives of men than all the moral essays in the world (though these also belong to a past generation) or than all the discussions of social questions, or all the disquisitions upon literal observances, or all the exhortations to Church privileges which have ever been uttered. Ours must be a gospel of love, a gospel of hope, and above all a gospel of Jesus Christ. The poor downcast spirit-broken sufferers want something to cheer and inspire. I do not think art will be much of a gospel to these, I do not think beauty, and grace, and suggestiveness of new regions of imagination, and delicacy of thought or conception, speak in a language they can understand. They have got to learn its alphabet. Mind, I think such refinements of life are of priceless value. There are those who know what they mean. And we long that multitudes of others should some day be able to spell out their beautiful lessons. But for the very poor, for whom we are trying to

find a true gospel, I do not think art is the avenue to religion. I think on the contrary that religion is for them the one avenue to art. I think their first dream of beauty will come from that faith which looks on the unseen, and pictures the glorious things behind the veil of sense. I think their first conception of loftier and purer things than at present enfold their dim and dreary lives will spring from a vision of the purity and meekness and tenderness of a Saviour's perfect example. I doubt much whether for them art is to open a pathway for an angel's feet. It seems to me more likely that art, with all fair things, will follow when the angel's feet have led the way. I see many sad and weary hearts. I listen to many sad and bitter tales of suffering. I do not see the sad hearts cheered, or the suffering charmed away, by the beautiful. But I have seen the smile pass upon the wan face at the mention of the Name of Jesus. I have seen the listless eye light up at the tale of the Father's love. In these is the true gospel for the poor. It is in preaching the free love of God, and the infinite tenderness and mercy of the Saviour, that the Church must make it manifest to the the world that 'to the poor the Gospel is preached.' BISHOP WALSHAM HOW,

Cambridge Review, Feb. 11, 1886.

Good Tidings for the Poor.

The poor have good tidings preached to them. S. MATTHEW xi. 5.

THESE words occur in the answer which the Lord returned to John the Baptist, who from his lonely prison had sent disciples to Him to inquire whether He was indeed the promised Deliverer. 'Art thou,' he asked, 'He that should come, or do we look for another?' The Lord replied by recounting what He did. His works were His answer. 'Go your way,' He said, 'and tell John the things which you do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.' The poor have good tidings preached to them—greater than the restoration of physical powers, greater than the removal of bodily disease, greater even than the immediate conquest of the grave, was the last miracle of Divine power and love, greater, more persuasive, more enduring, the message of a universal gospel. It is clear why this must always be the decisive sign of Christ the Saviour of the world. Difficulties may arise as to the reality and significance of isolated phenomena which no evidence can wholly meet. But the truth which makes itself known to man as man, the truth which finds us in the changeful labours and sorrows of life, in solitude and in conflict, the truth which enriches us however poor we are, however slender may be

our natural store of moral, intellectual, or material endowments, this is its own witness. No time, no distance, no peculiarities of national character, no revolutions of speculative thought, can affect its claims. It appeals to the individual soul, it appeals to the soul of humanity. Thus the sign by which the Divine authority of the Master was to be recognised is the sign by which His Church must indicate its claims.

I. Before we apply the text, we must take care not to misunderstand or limit its scope. We must not confine the application of the witnesses to which the Lord appealed to the Scriptural and most obvious sense of the words; to the poor, as the world counts poverty. Indeed, the interpretation which by common consent we give to the term 'poor' reveals and condemns the shallowness of the popular idea. We speak and think as if they only were poor who are straitened in material resources, who find it hard to provide food and shelter from day to day, who can make but the scantiest provision for times of yet sharper need. But the life is more than meat, and man liveth not by bread alone. There is a poverty of heart and soul sadder and more desolating than poverty of body. There is a poverty which makes itself felt as a crushing load in the palaces of the wealthy and in the schools of the wise. The least reflection will show how this is so, and how sorely we need to reflect upon the truth. For is it not the fact that we ourselves create in a large degree the world in which we live? We give its real value to the abundance or to the penury by which we are surrounded. We see or feel no more than we have trained faculties for seeing or feeling. We enjoy that with which we are able to sympathise, and our enjoyment is measured by our sympathy. Thus the soul rich in mental wealth moves about as in a poet's paradise. To such a soul

> 'The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.'

Such a soul in the commonest things, conscious of harmonies of sound and colour, enters into the fulness of being, fertile in unceasing variety of beauty. It peoples each familiar scene with heroes of the past. It holds friendly converse with the greatest of all time. The brook becomes for it a living voice, the work of art a revelation, a confession of a kindred nature.

The soul, again, which is rich in moral wealth opens streams of feeling on every side. It is quickened by the response of hearts touched by its natural warmth. It calls out powers which wait for its bidding to display their activity. It is strong with the strength of multitudes who recognise its sovereignty. If, as we have been taught, love is the measure of life, then no life can be ampler than that which such a soul commands. Gold and silver, purple and fine linen,

and sumptuous fare add nothing to the wealth of the soul which makes the whole world its minister.

And what shall we say, then, on the other hand, of the poor dull soul? Of the soul which spells out with difficulty the simplest lessons of nature or life, for which the waters have no music and the sky no imagery, for which

> 'The primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose is to him,
> And nothing more;'

for which our great cathedral has no lessons in its subtleties of proportion, in its faithfulness to type, in its harmonious combinations, or in its relics honoured for a thousand years? Of the soul which is fast confined in its narrow cell, neither understanding nor understood; alone, apart, in the concourse of men, the soul which cannot touch its own impulses and cannot interpret them, but who can perhaps feel sadly that it chills and checks the ardour of those with whom it is brought into contact?

Can any outward poverty compare with this inner poverty, which touches not the circumstances of life but the powers of life; which leaves the wealthiest beggared in thought in the midst of his splendour, and the wisest destitute of sympathy in the midst of his intellectual triumphs? When once we feel what life is we feel, and not till then, what poverty is. And so the power of the Gospel rises before us in its fullest extent, for in that, and in that alone, the poor—the poor in means and the poor in faculties, the poor in body and the poor in soul—have good tidings preached to them, and our Church is the faithful herald of the Gospel. I say, then, that in the deepest, largest sense the poor have good tidings preached to them. The power of our faith is measured only by the wants and weaknesses of men. In this boundless capacity it stands alone.

II. As in old times men seemed to find for themselves a theory of the universe able to bring peace to a select band of privileged philosophers—but it was peace at the price of isolation—so there are those in our own times who seem to find adequate satisfaction in the multitudinous experiences which they can crowd into the brief space of three score years and ten. But such men have no gospel for the great multitude whose thoughts move in a narrow circle, and whose days are filled with momentous duties. And if others, again, dazzled by the sight of pleasures which can only be purchased by opulence, are not afraid to offer the luxury of the few as a prize for the labour or the violence of the many, they seem to me to display to a criminal ambition a name equally illusionary and unattainable, for I can see no enduring hope for men in any change of circumstances effected

from without. Physical pleasure brings no discipline and no unwearying satisfaction. Power carries with it no true sense of dignity, and indulgence leaves no sense of rest. What we need more than any readjustment of the conditions of life is a purer ideal of life, a more prevailing motive of service, a more elevating view of the end of labour. We all of us require to learn, each in the fulfilment of his least office, that we have no right but duties, and no solitary joy. This Christ teaches still, while He proclaims glad tidings to the poor.

Therefore the soul naturally Christian refuses to rest in the partial gospels of man's invention, which guard their blessings as the possession of men of letters or of men of science; as the possession of the rich or of the strong. It turns to the Gospel of the Word Incarnate, and it does not turn in vain, for by this Gospel it is open to the meanest and the feeblest in our eyes to have a share in that glorified manhood which Christ has borne to the right hand of God. In this the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Here is the truth which the most ignorant can grasp for the hallowing of his simplest ordinary work, as he feels that he is an object of the love of God, called to fulfil the purposes of God; the truth which the wisest can see, and which has the power to enlarge every phase of human thought; the truth which, resting in our love, teaches us to know that we were made for love, and to find in its exercise our own selves —losing our souls that we may find them—for

> 'Life with all it brings of joy or woe
> Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love.'

The Gospel of Christ, the Word Incarnate, gives back to every child of earth, through the atonement, his spiritual sovereignty over the world, and shows him how the kingdom over which he is set becomes one great sacrament of the Heavenly Father. Here, then, is the truth which establishes on an immovable foundation that devout reverence for the least phenomena of the outward world which is the glory of physical science; the truth which witnesses to the reality of a Divine presence in things visible; the truth which brings the conviction that the world is the reflection of the Divine mind which our minds can interpret. The Gospel of Christ, the Word Incarnate, declares with irresistible power the unity of mankind, so that we cannot for one moment separate ourselves from any who share with us that nature which He has taken to Himself. Here, then, is the truth which consecrates the largest and the least heritage or accumulation of wealth with a social blessing, and constrains each believer to recognise in every gift a talent to be administered for the common good; the truth which fills the poorest with sympathy for those who

have the awful responsibility of great possessions: the truth which makes it clear—clear in thought as it is clear in experience—that he who would monopolise enjoyment destroys it for himself.

III. The Gospel of Christ, the Word Incarnate of God, entering into our life is indeed good tidings—good tidings to the poor—as reaching down to the lowest depths where humanity still lingers, and growing with man's growth to the utmost bounds of his possible attainments, reaching and growing without limit, for if it could be shown that any human powers lie without the range of its benediction; that any form of man's distress and perplexity is inaccessible to its consolation; that any parts of Nature or history are in conflict with its premises, then I should feel compelled to write against this also the sentence of dreariness and desolation, and look for another. But the Gospel of Christ is subject to no such condemnation. It shows us that the Divine is the foundation of the human and (most overwhelming wonder) that the human is the fulfilment of the Divine. It turns our thoughts from what we can do to what God has done and is doing. It discloses in the idea of creation a splendour which communicates its light to all created things. It pierces to the depths of misery, and brings back even from their darkness a promise of hope. It transfigures all personal suffering by the thought of a fellowship with God in Christ. It is a new, an eternal commandment in which all things, our utmost hopes and efforts, are shown to be of Him, and through Him and unto Him.

BISHOP WESTCOTT,
Christian World Pulpit, Dec. 23, 1891.

A Gospel for the Poor.

The dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me. S. MATTHEW xi. 5, 6.

THESE words are part of a message sent by Christ to one who was beginning to be offended in him. For this surely is the true meaning of the question that John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask of Christ, 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' John sent this message, as you know, from a prison into which he had been cast for fulfilling his great mission as the forerunner of God's kingdom of righteousness on earth. As the messenger, as the herald of that kingdom, he had boldly rebuked vice and commanded repentance; and the result is that he is languishing in chains and waiting for death; and as he lies thus, he hears of the great progress of the kingdom to which he had witnessed: he hears of the mighty miracles of the King of Righteousness that he had

crowned and recognised in his baptism; and yet he, the messenger of the kingdom, the herald of the king, is left unaided and seemingly unpitied, to perish.

The answer of Christ to the question of the Baptist is twofold. He bids His disciples tell John of His works and of His word, of His miracles and of His teaching. 'Tell John the things ye see and hear.' There is the great division, you will observe, of the evidence of Christianity,—the miracles that attested it, the word for man's heart that it has to give for man's Maker and Father.

But our Lord speaks of one special characteristic of this gospel. It is not merely a gospel generally, but it is a gospel for the poor. What is there in this fact of its being a gospel for the poor that should be so significant that our Lord gives this fact a place in the evidences of that gospel next to His miracles, next to the very raising of the dead?

Let us try to understand this one special characteristic and evidence of the gospel of Christ, that it is good news for the poor.

I. And let us see in the first place why it is so difficult to imagine that there should be any gospel for poverty in this world. What is poverty? Poverty is only another word for human imperfection and weakness. The life of humanity on earth is a life of struggle with nature. That is no discovery of modern science: it is as old as the first chapter of the Book of Genesis: 'Replenish the earth and subdue it.' It is in proportion as man subdues the earth and by strength or skill wrings from it its treasures, that progress, civilisation, wealth, increase and prosper. But all men are not equally fitted for this struggle with nature, are not equally gifted with the power of acquiring or of keeping their acquisitions. The strong frame, the keen brain, the resolute will, conquer circumstances in nature,—acquire the earth and subdue it. The weaker fail to do this, suffer and hunger; and the consequence is that though there is enough for all, though there is a feast spread for all, the strong force their way to the table where it is spread, and the weak are thrust aside, and we call the strong the rich, and we call the weak the poor.

Christianity claims to be a supernatural kingdom, and in that kingdom it gives the poor man, as such, a place and a future.

What is the gospel of the politician for the poor? It is this, that poverty is not natural, but unnatural and artificial; that it is entirely the result of the cruel and the cunning laws made by the rich for their own advantage, and that if the masses would believe this, and rise in their might, they would reconstitute society, and give every man enough, and that there would not be too much for any.

And this has a sound of good news. It might be a gospel only for one thing, and that is that it is a lie; that it is a wicked, and a

cruel, and a misleading lie—a lie that all philosophy, and all experience, and all history, supplies the denial and the refutation of—a lie because it is based upon a denial of the fundamental facts of human nature itself.

There is no gospel in communism for the poor, but there is a directly opposite teaching for the poor—the teaching not of the politician, but of the man of science. What has he to say? This: the present state of the poor man is not unnatural; it is necessary; it is inevitable; it is the working of the great law which we are beginning to understand rules all forms of life—the survival of the fittest growth by natural selection; that which we see to rule in the lower forms of animal life is true of mankind; and what we human animals call poverty is nothing else than the working of that beneficent law of nature. Why it should be beneficent they do not stop to tell us: they do not stop to tell us of the working of that beneficent law of nature by which the weak perish and the strong survives; the individual suffers and the race grows. Is this true? We have good reason to believe it is. Not all the truth, thank God, but a large part of the truth. It is true—horribly, hideously, scientifically true, but it surely is no gospel.

II. Now let us turn to the gospel of Christianity, and let us see what it has to say. What is the gospel that Christ sends us to preach to poverty? What word has it to say to the poor man? It takes up, in the first place, only as a truth what was a lie in the lips of the communist; it takes up what, in the utterances of Christianity, is a truth, and a deep one, and it is this—the present state and condition of the poor is not a natural one, not that in which man first was placed, is not that to which man shall at last attain; there is another, there is a better, there is a truer, there is a more deeply natural, although it be also a supernatural order of things; the present state and condition of things is not eternal; the things that are seen with all their inexorable laws and conditions of suffering, with all their dumb confused strife of misery—these are only the phenomena, these are the things that are seen and pass away; but the things that are not seen, they are eternal. God has another world in which to redress the inequalities of this; God has an eternity in which to console the poor.

Once more. The gospel of Christianity is more than the gospel of the resurrection. In its promise of future happiness Christianity resembles somewhat, and shares its promises somewhat with other religions; but it has one distinct peculiarity of its own, and that is, that it promises not only glory and peace after suffering, but it promises these as the result and the fruit of suffering in this life. 'Made perfect through suffering.' This is the law that governs that

supernatural kingdom, the law to which even its King was subject that He might bring many to glory; the law that requires that sin which hinders our happiness shall be burned out by sorrow, chastening, and cross-bearing here, so that He says that he who would follow Him shall take up his cross; so that He tells the rich man that if he would walk with Him heavenwards, he must be ready to give up and part with his riches, and become poor even at His bidding; so that He tells the poor man that weariness, that sorrow, that toil, that suffering, that disappointment, if taken as the cross, if lifted as the burden that the Saviour has appointed, bear rich fruits in the glory of heaven.

And so out of suffering comes joy; out of labour, rest; out of sorrow, eternal peace; and so the trials of the poor in this world are, in the kingdom of Christ, made as spiritual life for the world to come.

But, in the last place, Christianity is the gospel of the poor even for this life. It has the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come. Christianity is the gospel of a brotherhood—of a real brotherhood, because it reveals a real fatherhood, the only true fatherhood of humanity, the fatherhood of God in Christ. He so loved the world that He sent His Son; and in that Son mankind are brothers once again; and all other talk of fraternity is a hollow mockery, and an unreal imitation of the true brotherhood of Christianity. It gives the poor man the right to appeal from his neglectful or cruel brother on earth to the Father of both in heaven. It leaves him no longer the scarce noticed and unnumbered unit in the vast web that men call humanity; it gives to every individual man created by the Father, redeemed by the Son—the right of the created and the redeemed one; it clothes the meanest and the poorest among us with the majesty of immortality and guards him round with all the sanctities of redemption. It gives the poor man the right to use words of magic power on the hearts of those who believe the name he utters: it gives him the right to protest against injustice in the name of God: it gives him the right to beseech for pity in the name of Christ.

ARCHBISHOP MAGEE,

Penny Pulpit, New Series, No. 845.

The Offence of Christ.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me. S. MATTHEW xi. 6.

IT is a common saying, None of us know what we are, till we are tried. What strange revelations are sometimes made—I say not now to other men, but even to ourselves—of unsuspected

workings of evil within, under strong and sharp temptation! Deeds or words or desires concerning which we should have been ready to say at other times, *Is thy servant a dog, that he should do or say or conceive this thing?* have been found not only possible but actual when the subtle enemy presents them to us at what is (for him and his devices) a fitting and a suitable time. And then we wake from the dream of self-righteousness and self-conceit, to find ourselves fallen indeed: happy if we do not draw from this humiliation an inference of absolute hopelessness and blank despair!

Now to this class of human experiences belong those sudden failures of faith, of which some sound and even eminent Christians have had to complain. The very rock under their feet has seemed to be crumbling into fragments, or *sinking like lead in the mighty waters.* They have looked upward through the darkness, and seen no light. They have felt after their Saviour, and He was not; they have cried aloud to God, and He did not answer. This has been the case more especially in seasons of inaction and solitude. Work is a great bracer of faith: it proves that there is some faith, and it reacts upon the faith out of which it springs. And Christian companionship is a great comforter of faith: that in which others around me are surely believing seems to me the more credible and the more certain. But take away both these things, work and companionship; shut a man up in prison, and leave his mind (as we powerfully describe it) to prey upon itself; and see what his faith may dwindle to then!

I. To such causes I would trace the inquiry of John the Baptist, recorded in this day's Gospel.

The key of the difficulty is in his circumstances. John was now in prison; soon to exchange confinement for martyrdom; at present lying, for he knew not how long, under the arbitrary sentence of a wicked and tyrannical king. I can suppose that doubts visited him, even him, in that solitude, in that inaction. He heard indeed of Christ's works; the fame of these reached him in the prison: but there was much to surprise him in the resolute adherence on the part of Jesus to a position of humility and comparative privacy: John may have shared the common feeling of his countrymen, *If Thou do these things*, if Thou claim by Thy mighty works to be the Messiah, the Son of God, *show Thyself to the world.*

We read the inquiry as John's question for himself, and not only as his question for the satisfaction of his disciples. And yet we do not infer from it more than the natural longing of a faithful yet depressed man for an additional ray of the light of God's truth. We feel with him in that longing: we can ourselves, with all our hearts, echo that prayer.

II. And it is instructive, and comforting too, to observe how Jesus

answered it. He did not, as some modern teachers using His name might have done, repel the inquiry as a sin. He did not reprove the message and let the messengers return unanswered. No: there was the same compassionate heart, the same wise mind, the same *divine goodness and forbearance and longsuffering*, which at a later time, under circumstances widely different, allowed a doubting Apostle to enjoy the very proof which he demanded, and yet, in the act of doing so, pronounced a double blessing upon those who rest satisfied with that evidence which God deems sufficient, and are contented, by God's grace, even without seeing, to believe.

And well indeed might He add, in the words of the text itself, *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.* To be *offended*, in the Scripture sense of the term, is to be staggered, to be tripped up, to be caused to stumble and fall, by some obstacle lying in the way of our steps. Especially is it applied to the work of temptation or sin in overthrowing the constancy or destroying the consistency of one of Christ's disciples. Thus it is written, *Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!* In something of the same sense our Lord here speaks of the blessedness of that man who allows nothing, no impediment, no stumblingblock, of mind or life, to shake the steadfastness of his faith in Him. *Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended*, caused to stumble, *in Me*, in the case of Me, of My doctrine, or My person, or My demands.

III. *Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.* There was one principal cause in those days, and there is one principal cause in these days, of men being offended in Jesus Christ.

(1) In those days the chief hindrance to faith was the lowliness of Christ's position. The Old Testament Scriptures seemed to speak of a Prince and a Conqueror; of One who should make Jerusalem the pride of the earth, and exalt her people to universal dominion. So they read them. And having once formed this conception of *Him that should come*, they gave no heed to other declarations of the same Holy Book, which as plainly indicated a previous humility and suffering.

Now I do not say that there is no danger in these times of a precisely similar kind of offence. There are many in these times, as in those, who can see and even admire *the Man Christ Jesus*, but who cannot rise from that contemplation to the true faith of the Son of God Most High. They talk of the beauty of His character, of the wisdom of His doctrine, of the holiness of His life: but they cannot believe in His proper Incarnation, His proper Divinity, or His proper glory. Are there any such amongst us? God give them a better mind; a truer discernment of things that differ; a juster because a higher estimate of their Lord and their God!

(2) But when we speak of the peculiar danger of these times, in reference to the offence of Christ, we shall think less of His lowliness than of another characteristic, the holiness of Christ. For one man amongst us who rejects Christ (in His true character) because he cannot understand how a Man could also be very God, a thousand probably refuse His salvation because He is too strict for them in His example and in His enforcement of holiness. In short, sin is the stumblingblock, rather than incredulity. There is an elevation, and a purity, and a practical character, in Christ's teaching, which keeps off from Him those who love and will retain their sin.

C. J. VAUGHAN,
Words from the Gospels, p. 138.

The Offence of the Cross.

Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me. S. MATTHEW xi. 6.

1. WHAT was it in our Saviour's time which made the greater part of the Jewish people and of the Gentiles too mere unbelievers? It was the offence of the Cross. They were told plainly that they must suffer with Him and deny themselves; and this they could not endure, and now they are still told the same. In it is the truth of God and of Christ and cannot change. We are proud of holding ourselves up, of leaning on ourselves, of judging for ourselves, and being manly, free, and independent. But if there be any truth in the Creed of the Apostles, all this freedom and independence is quite out of place in a Christian. He is not his own; he is bought with a price, and has to measure all his doings and sufferings by the good pleasure of another.

II. Many a man is at heart an unbeliever because he cannot bear to submit himself. His common sense tells him that if the Gospel be true, he ought to put himself under the direction of those to whom Christ has intrusted it; and this is so contrary to our natural pride, that it seems to many of us worse than death, and so it ends in our making up our minds that after all the Gospel is not so very true.

And there is one thing more which hurts some very much, and greatly hinders their repentance, when through God's grace they begin to be that way disposed: I mean the ridicule of bad or foolish companions. For a very little laughter they grow ashamed of honouring Christ. Ought we not heartily to lay hold of the hem of His garment, thus held out to you, in love to Him, and in hope of after blessing?

J. KEBLE,
Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve, p. 362.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

The Message to the Baptist.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me. S. MATTHEW xi. 6.

JOHN lies here in his dungeon. At the age, perhaps, of two or three and thirty years, he is stopped in his career of activity,—stopped finally to all appearance, unless he will compromise truth, honour, virtue, and become the vile thing against which his life has been a protest. All that activity has in it for a man whose days are still young, and his powers fresh, and his faculties buoyant, is gone from him, suddenly and for ever. His question to our Lord, 'Art thou He that should come?' is the question of a man in weakness and depression; in these circumstances which bring every buried misgiving to the surface—more especially such doubts as have their roots in reason and religion. We do not suppose him even for a moment to have lost faith in one to whom His very mission was a testimony. We only suppose him to have been perplexed.

I. S. Luke tells us that 'in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight.' That was His answer. 'Art thou He that should come?' He answers not—yet He answers. Answers by deed, ere He speaks. His depressed and distressed kinsman shall hear in his prison, not in vague dim rumour, but from many eyewitnesses, some of the works of Christ.

II. Who are in danger of being 'offended'? The mystery of the Incarnation, and the mystery of Sacrifice, and the mystery of Risen Life are still alike equally foolishness to the wise.

Set not your negatives against God's positives. Be yourselves living witnesses to His grace and power. Suffer Him to put forth upon you His healing, quickening, transfiguring hand! Prove Him, by faith and for aye, as to His power, and love, and will to save, and then you will feel that however mysterious, however ambiguous may be His manner of working in the Church and in the world, this cannot shake, this cannot invalidate the direct evidence which you possess of His Messiahship and His Deity.

C. J. VAUGHAN,
Words of Hope, p. 53.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

A Feast of Fatness.

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.
ISAIAH XXV. 6-8.

THIS prophecy is Messianic, and presents to us the Gospel dispensation, first in its present state of grace, and next in its coming state of victory and glory.

I. First, it presents to us the Gospel dispensation in its present state of grace. The prophet says, 'In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things.'

This Gospel dispensation, with its blessings and its privileges, is spoken of under the familiar image of a feast.

The imagery, which is so full of detail in this passage, is eminently calculated to present to us an idea of the fulness of the grace of the Gospel. It is not as if God was offering provision to starving men just enough, as we should say in common parlance, to keep body and soul together. It is not a scanty provision: it is not a provision simply of bread and water. Even in that glorious and glowing prophecy which is contained in a later chapter of this book, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money,' though the prophecy speaks of 'water' and of 'bread,' in contradistinction to the bread which satisfieth not, we have there immediately, 'Yea, come, take wine and milk,' and the soul of those who accept the invitation is bidden to delight itself in fatness.

Every believing man who is in Christ—every man who is trying from day to day, and from hour to hour, to maintain his inner life, that life which is hidden with Christ in God—is as a man sitting down at a perpetual feast. Every day is, in this sense, a feast day to him. Every day is a day upon which he is to be feeding upon Christ, and to be nourishing his soul with the rich and costly blessings of salvation. And when we ask what we mean by this,—when, again, we strip off the imagery of the text, and say, 'What are the

substantial blessings which all this indicates to you and to me, if we are in Christ?'—we say, when God provides for us the forgiveness of sins, and when God tells us that our sins are forgiven, and when God says that in the Lord Jesus Christ, and through His blood and His righteousness, He has freely justified us, does He mean, when He speaks in this way, that we are to live continually contented with just hoping to touch with the tip of our finger the hem of the Saviour's garment? No such thing. Better, indeed, to touch with the tip of the finger the hem of the Saviour's garment than to keep at a distance from Him, and not to touch Him at all. Better to have the feeblest faith than to be an unbeliever. But is this the condition in which God would have His believing people to be? I say again, no such thing. God intends that you should receive, and receive without doubting, and receive without reserve, when you come to Christ, the fulness and the freeness of His grace.

II. Beginning with this word of the Lord in Jerusalem—beginning with the taking away of the veil from off the faces of all people—beginning with the invitation to repent and believe and receive the remission of sins through our Lord Jesus Christ—the prophet goes on to what we find ultimately to be at the very end of the dispensation,—how naturally, as if there was no break, as if it was just one flow of grace until, if I may so express it, the river of grace is lost in the vast expanse of the ocean of glory. There seems to be no chasm. Glory, with all its details and all its blessedness, all its companionships and all its occupations, will be nothing more than the full efflorescence and the full development and the full consummation of the work of grace which is begun.

J. C. MILLER,
Penny Palpit, New Series, No. 720.

Death Swallowed up in Victory.

He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. ISAIAH XXV. 8.

REGARDING these words as predictive of the great results which were to follow on Messiah's coming, we may proceed to consider them, as setting forth two forms of victory which he should achieve for us, namely, the first, that he should abolish death; the second, that he should put an end to suffering and sorrow.

I. The text first sets Christ before us in the attitude of a conqueror over death. 'He shall swallow up death in victory,' it is said, and again in Hosea, 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be

thy destruction;' whilst still more strikingly in Timothy we read, 'But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.'

But what is the kind of death of which the Advent of Christ was to be the swallowing up? We know there is a Spiritual death, in regard of which it may be said of all who continue in it, that they die while they live, and there is an eternal death in regard of which all who are doomed to it, may be said to live while they die. But of neither of these deaths does the prophet speak as being swallowed up by the coming of Christ—not of spiritual death, for how many are lying under its power now—many who have seen the day of Christ—who never saw any other—but who yet have neither rejoiced in its light, nor yielded to its power, nor cared to become the subjects of its quickening and converting grace—people who in the strong language of the Apostle are twice dead—that is, dead, alive, and dead again; dead in trespasses and sins first, then alive by the force of the Gospel message upon the conscience, and dead again by reason of that destroyed religious sensibility which experience teaches us always ensues upon vouchsafements of grace neglected, and means of grace despised. It is no necessary part of Messiah's victory to swallow up this death. Neither does it ever attain to His covenant-undertakings to swallow up Death Eternal. This too has its ordained and its permitted victims, as well as the death spiritual, the one being, in fact, both the sequence and the penalty of the other. The first death, or that by which we become deprived of the life of God in our souls, is our own act. It results not from any stroke inflicted by God Himself upon our spiritual part producing death, but in our own sin, and consequent separation from the source of light. It is manifest, that when it is said by the prophet that Christ at His coming shall swallow up death in victory, the expression is to be limited to the death of the body—that death, which on account of the first transgression, was to pass upon all men—the penalty and the fruit of sin. Now this death is to be swallowed up—quenched, absorbed, as the original word implies—just as something which the sea might bury in its depths, or the fire decompose into its elemental forms. Appear on the earth it may, and even reign it may over all, from Adam to Moses save only two, and from Moses to the last of Adam born, save only those who shall be alive at the time of the Lord's appearing, but it is not to be a reign of terror, for, for this purpose among others, the Son of God was manifested that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage.

II. Glance at one or two practical conclusions to be derived from our subject.

(1) One effect of it should be to fortify us against the fear of death. This fear, I have said, is an instinct with us—is incorporated as it were upon our lapsed and fallen nature; it is not necessarily connected with any anticipation of what is to follow, but springs from an apparently universal feeling that death is a punishment for sin; that originally man was not made to die, that some wrong has been done to the beneficent purposes of the Creator of which our dying is the bitter fruit. Then it is a part of Christ's victory to have the rule not only over death, but over all that region of the invisible to which death leads. Christ reigns there, His angels line all the passages, there is no interval during which the departing spirit is left alone. At one moment it is dwelling in the flesh, the next it is present with the Lord. May the thought support us in that hour when nothing human can! Comforting is it to think no doubt of the angel of the Divine presence going before us in the dark and perplexing passages of our life; but to have this same presence in our last hour, to be able to be looking upon the fire and the cloud going before us, for us to feel as we pass through the swellings of Jordan, a hand laid gently upon us saying, 'Fear not, I am He that liveth and was dead' —this is strength, this is peace, this is victory: 'O death! where is thy sting?'

(2) Again, our subject should suggest to us the wisdom of instant submission to the Saviour's authority. A twofold end would seem to be contemplated in giving this absolute dominion over death, namely, that He should be omnipotent to conquer as well as mighty to save —a terror to His enemies as well as a protector to His friends, and one or other of these we all are. The whole world of responsible beings is divided into those who are under the sceptre, and those who are under the rod. We must yield either to the power of the grace of Jesus, or fall under the scourge of His resentment; we must make our peace now through the blood of His Cross, or, with the sentence of wrath abiding upon us, pass through the gates of hell and death.

(3) This blessed promise we have been considering, like all our Advent promises, belongs to believers, and to believers only. As there is a death which Christ has not swallowed up, so there are tears which the Lord God has not promised to wipe away, but which in righteous displeasure at His despised compassions He will leave to flow on for ever.

D. MOORE,

Penny Pulpit, No. 3548.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Waiting of Prophecy.

It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. ISAIAH XXV. 9.

AMONG the prophets and seers who lived before the birth of Christ, no one knew so much as Isaiah concerning Christ's wonderful nature, and the wonderful spirit that was to be in Him, a spirit so unlike whatever man, before Christ came into the world, had been wont to admire and covet. No one was enabled to cast his eyes so far beyond the pale of his own nation, to the time when all the Gentiles were to come to the brightness of Christ's rising. In his song God speaks in His majesty. He speaks as He speaks in the golden colours of dawn. When the Daystar Himself arose, He shone with a mild and calm light, spreading gently over all things. But before He arose, He lit up the clouds, which were to be the heralds of His approach, with a splendour far surpassing whatever shall be seen on the face of the earth. This, then, was the reason why the Church has appointed that Isaiah should be read to her people at this time of the year. Because Isaiah saw more of Christ, and knew more of Christ, than any other of the prophets; therefore through the solemn season of Advent the prophecies of Isaiah are read.

I. According to the words of the text, we should be *waiting for the Lord.* We should be waiting and looking out for Christ, waiting and looking out for Him, not merely in order that we may see Him as He passes by, but in order that we may fall down before Him and embrace His feet and receive Him into our hearts. We are to wait for Him by believing in Him, by loving Him and by doing His will. We are to wait in patience for His own time. But we are not to wait in idleness; we are not to wait with our hands folded, with the eyes of our understanding closed, with a hood over our hearts. No, we are to wait looking out for Him, in the assurance that He will come, in the assurance that if He finds us waiting, like diligent servants, in faith and love and obedience, He will reward us with the riches of His grace; but that if He finds us sleeping, asleep in heart and mind, and only panting and struggling in the feverish dreams of ungodliness, He will bid us depart from Him, and declare that He knows us not.

II. Our Lord, we know, has come; our salvation has been wrought. At the appointed time He came in the flesh and wrought it; and from that day to this no one, who has ever waited for Him, has failed to see his salvation. Wait then for Him in the full assurance that He will come to you. He has come to you already. He has

come to you in His baptism, He has come to you by the preaching of His word; He has come to you again and again by the proffered communion of His Body and Blood; He has come to you in all the gracious visitations of His Spirit. Wait, therefore, for the end in prayer; wait for Him by the study of His word; wait for Him by seeking His ordinances; wait for Him by cherishing every grace of His ordinances. For there is a day, and we know not how far off, when He will come to every one of us, and to the whole world, in the power and glory of the Father, to execute judgment and wrath, whose fan is in His hand, to sever the good from the evil.

J. C. HARE,

Herstmonceux Sermons, vol. i. p. 95.

Our Strong City.

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah:
We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.
Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

Isaiah xxvi. 1, 2.

WHAT day is 'that day'? The answer carries us back a couple of chapters, to the great picture drawn by the prophet of a world-wide judgment, which is followed by a burst of song from the ransomed people of Jehovah, like Miriam's chant by the shores of the Red Sea. The 'city of confusion,' the centre of the power hostile to God and man, falls; and its fall is welcomed by a chorus of praises. The words of my text are the beginning of one of these songs. Whether or not there were any historical event which floated before the prophet's mind is wholly uncertain. If there were a smaller judgment upon some city of the enemy, it passes in his view into a world-wide judgment; and my text is purely ideal, imaginative and apocalyptic. Its nearest ally is the similar vision of the Book of the Revelation, where, when Babylon sank with a splash like a millstone in the stream, the ransomed people raised their praises.

So, then, whatever may have been the immediate horizon of the prophet, and though there may have stood in it some historical event, the city which he sees falling is other than any material Babylon, and the strong city in which he rejoices is other than the material Jerusalem, though it may have suggested the metaphor of my text. The song fits our lips quite as closely as it did the lips from which it first sprang, thrilling with triumph. 'We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.'

There are three things, then, here; the city, its defences, its citizens.

I. The City.

Now, no doubt the prophet was thinking of the literal Jerusalem, but the city is ideal, as is shown by the bulwarks which defend, and by the qualifications which permit entrance. And so we must pass beyond the literalities of Palestine, and, as I think, must not apply the symbol to any visible institution or organisation if we are to come to the depth and greatness of the meaning of these words. No church which is organised amongst men can be the New Testament representation of this strong city. And if the explanation is to be looked for in that direction at all, it can only be the invisible aggregate of ransomed souls which is regarded as being the Zion of the prophecy.

The central thought that was moving in the prophet's mind is that of the indestructible vitality of the true Israel, and the order which it represented, of which Jerusalem on its rock was but to him a symbol. And thus for us the lesson is that, apart altogether from the existing and visible order of things in which we dwell, there is a polity to which we may belong, for 'ye are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God,' and that order is indestructible. Convulsions come, every Babylon falls, all human institutions change and pass. 'The kingdoms old' are 'cast into another mould.' But persistent through them all, and, at the last, high above them all, will stand the stable polity of Heaven, 'the city which hath the foundations.'

II. Note, secondly, the defences.

'Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.' This 'evangelical prophet,' as he has been called, is distinguished, not only by the clearness of his anticipations of Jesus Christ and His work, but by the fulness and depth which he attaches to that word 'salvation.' He all but anticipates the New Testament completeness and fulness of meaning, and lifts it from all merely material associations of earthly or transitory deliverance into the sphere in which we are accustomed to regard it as especially moving. By 'salvation,' he means and we mean, not only negative but positive blessings. Negatively it includes the removal of every conceivable or endurable evil, 'all the ills that flesh is heir to,' whether they be evils of sin or evils of sorrow; and, positively, the investiture with every possible good that humanity is capable of, whether it be good of goodness or good of happiness. This is what the prophet tells us is the wall and bulwark of his ideal-real city.

Mark the eloquent omission of the name of the builder of the wall. 'God' is a supplement. Salvation 'will *He* appoint for walls and

bulwarks.' No need to say who it is that flings such a fortification around the city. There is only one hand that can trace the lines of such walls; only one hand that can pile their stones; only one that can lay them, as the walls of Jericho were laid, in the blood of His first-born Son. 'Salvation will He appoint for walls and bulwarks.' That is to say in a highly imaginative and picturesque form, that the defence of the city is God Himself; and it is substantially a parallel with other words which speak about Him as being 'a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of it.' Whom He means to keep safe are kept safe. Whom the operations of His mighty hand preserve are preserved.

'Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks,' and if we realise, as we ought to do, His purpose to keep us safe, and His power to keep us safe, and the actual operation of His hand keeping us safe at every moment, we shall not ask that these defences shall be supplemented by the poor feeble earthworks that sense can throw up.

III. Lastly, note the citizens.

Our text is part of a 'song,' and is not to be interpreted in the cold-blooded fashion that might suit prose. A voice, coming from whom we know not, breaks in upon the first strain with a command, addressed to whom we know not—'Open ye the gates'—the city thus far being supposed to be empty—'that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.' The central idea there is just this, 'Thy people shall be all righteous.' The one qualification for entrance into the city is absolute purity.

The New Testament, as emphatically as the old psalm, says 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' 'Let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' There is no way by which Christian men here on earth can pass into and keep within the city of the living God except they possess personal purity, righteousness of life, and cleanness of heart.

They used to say that Venice glass was so made that any poison poured into it shivered the vessel. Any drop of sin poured into your cup of communion with God shatters the cup and spills the wine. Whosoever thinks himself a citizen of that great city, if he falls into transgression, and soils the cleanness of his hands, and ruffles the calm of his pure heart by self-willed sinfulness, will wake to find himself not within the battlements, but lying wounded, robbed, solitary, in the pitiless desert. It is 'the righteous nation' that 'enters in,' even here on earth.

A. MACLAREN,
Paul's Prayers, p. 234.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Life of Peace.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. ISAIAH xxvi. 3.

THIS part of the prophecy of Isaiah is the very romance of religion. It has all that mysterious glory which a young heart —whether in the old or young—so often makes for itself, out of a world which to other eyes seems so commonplace and even jaded, and what the French would call *fade*. We do not need the learned disquisitions of the critics to teach us that this part of the great prophet's writings is a magnificent poem. I do not mean by that that it is not direct, Divine revelation, but that it is revelation clothed in that splendid robe of thought and speech which comes from the inner springs of things. Few things in Holy Scripture are more consoling and more full of teaching than this statement of the text. In the midst of the thrilling description of a tremendous triumph, in the midst of the startling statements of the final establishment of the city of God, we are suddenly reminded, lest we should think that high things and simple things do not go together in the Divine mind, that the life of peace in our pilgrim-journey may be a very real thing —as real as it is in the Mount Zion of the future, though not, of course, because of our frailty, so complete; that it springs from precisely the same source as that from which it will take its life in eternity; that it springs from its trust in God. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee.'

I. It is worth while to pause for a moment, to remind ourselves what stress is laid in Scripture upon the habit of *trust*. Naturally we find this brought out most distinctly in those writings which deal more than others with the interior and spiritual life—in the Prophets and the Psalms. There is something in us which demands the exercise of trust if things are to go on rightly at all. Society cannot long be held together unless there is some exercise of trust between man and man. The miserable suspiciousness which forms so marked a characteristic in human nature, and especially in English human nature, although it finds grounds enough for justification in much of human action, is still a sad mark of the Fall. An overtrusting nature is likely enough to be the victim of saddening surprises, likely enough to suffer from the liar and the cheat, likely enough to receive at times severe shocks and to undergo bitter disappointments; but at least it will have about it characteristics of generosity and springs of nobleness which are scarcely to be hoped for in the habitually suspicious.

II. It is equally striking, and naturally so, that Holy Scripture should lay stress upon faithfulness. For faithfulness is the co-relative of trust. If, indeed, in any nature trust is to be a prevailing power, it is because that in *that* nature there is some deep conviction that somewhere or other faithfulness does exist.

Faithfulness, indeed, may be said to be the most beautiful and the most necessary characteristic in a true soul. There are many beautiful things in the moral world; there are all sorts of gradations of light, and all sorts of combinations of colour; just as in the natural world the eye may delight itself in the variegated spectacle of changing flowers and colouring leaves, or in the constant and ever-varying pageantry of the splendid heavens. So in human character. Even with all our sins and all our frailties, there is an unfathomable fund of interest, and there are inexhaustible resources of beauty.

But however much we admire gifts and graces and beautiful characteristics, or incipient, or possible, or developed excellencies in human character, there is *one* thing about which we are quite certain, and that is, that the real ground and bond of all that is truly lovely —if that loveliness is to command our permanent admiration and our complete confidence—is *that* characteristic of unshaken truth and firm reality which can be relied upon, which assures us that what we admire has strength in it, and will last—which we call faithfulness. It is the bond of friendship; it is the heart's core of real love; it is the power which demands and draws out, and has a right to draw out and demand, the heart's best gift, which is perfect trust. It is that which to exist at all must exist without a flaw. It lies behind the nature of moral things, as interminable, unchanging space lies behind our atmosphere and our stars. It has to be taken for granted; it is so real, it has to be practically forgotten in the moral union between hearts and hearts. It is like the air we breathe, or the earth we tread upon, or the light by which we see the material universe. We hardly reason about it, or think of it, or discuss it. In the real union of moral nature with moral nature, and soul with soul, there it is, there it must be, or all is lost. As nothing in the moral world is so odious, or destructive of human happiness and human goodness, as lightness and inconstancy, so nothing is so necessary, nothing so beautiful, as faithfulness.

III. Now, one chief point in religion undoubtedly is a *sense of dependence*; so important is this, so much does the truth of it press upon many minds, that some good men have gone so far as to believe that in this religion consists. Without entering upon a discussion of such a point as this, it is quite true that a sense of dependence upon some one greater than ourselves is a real need for the development of our higher nature. Man cannot stand alone; to be self-dependent,

for him, is out of the question; he is born into a society; it is a mere trick of imagination which has led men to picture the individual man as the unit of the race. His upward aspirations, his longings for a higher life, his yearnings for better things, all point to the fact that there is One above him to whom he must cling. For the development of man's higher self there is more than mere clinging needed; there is something which has in it a moral element, something that implies an effort of the will, something that necessitates a surrender of the affections,—there is *trust*.

IV. To trust God is a duty as well as a grace. It requires, as I have implied, a moral exertion, and, like all moral exertions, it is rendered possible by a disciplined life. If we believe in God, we must be learning steadily to overcome habits of fretfulness, fault-finding, and despondency. We have to face difficulties as things meant for our trial and education—meant to be overcome. We have to be ready to acknowledge our faults, and to learn any salutary lessons that may be taught us by the discovery of them through others, or by the teachings of God in our own hearts. We have to endeavour to keep before us, with such constancy as we can, the greatness of our end, and to maintain in our will and mind a purpose of dignity proportionate to that end. We have to take God at His word, and take Him into our counsels by prayer on all the details—sorrows, joys, hopes, fears, beliefs, and disbelievings—which crowd around our life. And deeper within our hearts, by the grace that He gives us, we may be quite sure that there will be fixed, with increasing strength and helpfulness, the strong and beautiful spirit of trust.

W. J. KNOX LITTLE,
The Journey of Life, p. 159.

Perfect Peace.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. ISAIAH XXVI. 3.

THESE words are no mere ingenious paradox. Let us look at them by the light of our own circumstances. Let us test them in our own persons.

I. Take, for instance, the case of personal anxieties. Most—perhaps every one—of us suffer from these anxieties for ourselves; anxieties about our families; anxieties for the present; anxieties of a still deeper kind about the future. Though we are children of God, yet the cares of life come to us which come to all. They are the necessary incentive to our efforts. They are the necessary impulse to make us treasure otherwhere than on earth our hopes. But how differently do they happen to the Christian and to the sinner! The

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The Inhabitant of the Rock.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee.
Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.
ISAIAH xxvi. 3, 4.

THERE is an obvious parallel between these verses and the two preceding ones. The safety which was there set forth as the result of dwelling in the strong city is here presented as the consequence of trust. The emblem of the fortified place passes into that of the Rock of Ages. There is the further resemblance in form, that, just as in the two preceding verses we had the triumphant declaration of security, followed by a summons to some unknown persons to 'open the gates,' so here we have the triumphant declaration of perfect peace, followed by a summons to all, to 'trust in the Lord for ever.' If we may suppose the invocation of the preceding verses to be addressed to the watchers at the gate of the strong city, it is perhaps not too fanciful to suppose that the invitation in my text is the watchers' answer, pointing the way by which men may pass into the city.

I. First, then, notice the insight into the true nature of trust or faith given by the word employed here.

Now the literal meaning of the expression here rendered 'to trust' is to lean upon anything. As we say, trust is reliance. As a weak man might stay his faltering, tottering steps upon some strong staff, or might lean upon the outstretched arm of a friend, so we, conscious of our weakness, aware of our faltering feet, and realising the roughness of the road, and the smallness of our strength, may lay the whole weight of ourselves upon the loving strength of Jehovah. And that is the trust of the Old Testament, the faith of the New—the simple act of reliance going out of myself to find the bases of my being, forsaking myself to touch and rest upon the ground of my security, passing from my own weakness and laying my trembling hand in the strong hand of God.

II. Notice, secondly, the steadfast peacefulness of trust.

If we break up that complex thought into its elements, it just comes to this, first, that trust makes steadfastness. Most men's lives are blown about by winds of circumstance, directed by gusts of passion, shaped by accidents, and are fragmentary and jerky, like some ship at sea with nobody at the helm, heading here and there, as the force of the wind or the flow of the current may carry them. If my life is to be steadied, there must not only be a strong hand at the tiller, but some outward object which shall be for me the point

of aim and the point of rest. No man can steady his life except by clinging to a holdfast without himself. Some of us look for that stay in the fluctuations and fleetingnesses of creatures; and some of us are wiser and saner, and look for it in the steadfastness of the unchanging God. The men who do the former are the sport of circumstances, and the slaves of their own natures, and there is no consistency of noble aim and effort throughout their lives, corresponding to their circumstances, relations, and nature. Only they who stay themselves upon God, and get down through all the superficial shifting strata of drift and gravel to the base-rock, are steadfast and solid.

It is the mind that cleaves to God which God keeps. I suppose that there was floating before Paul's thoughts some remembrance of this great passage of the evangelical prophet when he uttered his words, which ring so curiously with so many echoes of them, when he said, 'The peace of God which passeth understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.' It is the steadfast mind that is kept in perfect peace. If we 'keep ourselves,' by that Divine help which is always waiting to be given, 'in the' faith and 'love of God,' He will keep us in the hour of temptation, will keep us from falling, and will garrison our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

This faithful, steadfast heart and mind, kept by God, is a mind filled with deepest peace. There is something very beautiful in the prophet's abandoning the attempt to find any adjective of quality which adequately characterises the peace of which he has been speaking. He falls back upon an expedient which is a confession of the impotence of human speech worthily to portray its subject when he simply says, 'Thou shalt keep in peace, peace . . . because he trusteth in Thee.' The reduplication expresses the depth and completeness of the tranquillity which flows into the heart. Such continuity, wave after wave, or rather ripple after ripple, is possible even for us.

III. Note again the worthiness of the Divine name to evoke, and the power of the Divine character to reward, the trust.

We pass to the last words of my text: 'In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.'

The words feebly rendered in the Authorised Version 'everlasting strength' are literally 'the Rock of Ages;' and that this verse is the source of that hallowed figure which, by one of the greatest of English hymns, is made familiar and immortal to all English-speaking people.

The metaphor needs no expansion. We understand that it conveys the idea of unchangeable defence. As the cliffs tower above the river that swirls at their base, and take centuries to eat the faintest line upon their shining surface, so the changeless God rises

above the stream of time, of which the brief breakers are human lives, 'sparkling, bursting, borne away.' They who fasten themselves to that Rock are safe in its unchangeable strength. God the Unchangeable is the amulet against any change that is not growth in the lives of those who trust Him. Some of us may recall some great precipice rising above the foliage, which stands to-day as it did when we were boys, unwasted in its silent strength, while generations of leaves have opened and withered at its base, and we have passed from childhood to age. Thus, unaffected by the transiency that changes all beneath, God rises, the Rock of Ages, in whom we may trust. 'The conies are a feeble folk, but they make their houses in the rocks.' So our weakness may house itself there and be at rest.

IV. Lastly, note the summons to trust.

We know not whose voice it is that is heard in the last words of my text, but we know to whose ears it is addressed. It is to all. 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever.'

Surely the blessed effects of trust have a voice of merciful invitation summoning us to exercise it. The promise of peace appeals to the deepest, though often neglected and misunderstood, longings of the human heart. 'Inly we sigh for that repose.' If it be true that into our agitated and struggling lives there may steal, and in them there may abide, this priceless blessing of a great tranquillity, surely nothing else should be needed to woo us to accept the conditions and put forth the trust. It is strange that we should turn away, as we are all tempted to do, from that rest in God, and try to find repose in what was only meant for stimulus, and is altogether incapable of imparting calm. Storms live in the lower regions of the atmosphere; get up higher and there is peace. Waves dash and break on the surface region of the ocean; get down deeper, nearer the heart of things, and again there is peace.

A. MACLAREN,
Paul's Prayers, p. 245.

The Judgment of God.

When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. ISAIAH xxvi. part of verse 9.

THE faculties of man are too limited to comprehend the nature of the divine judgments. The direction of events in the moral government of the world baffles his investigation. We have indeed the best authority for asserting that the administration of God's providence embraces the most minute, as well as the most stupendous, portions of His works. He 'feedeth the fowls of the air.' He 'causeth the bud of the tender herb to spring forth.' He

'numbereth the hairs of our head:' and without Him 'not a sparrow falleth to the ground.' On the other hand, 'He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven.' He 'ruleth in the kingdoms of men.' He 'stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waters, and the madness of the people.' We may, therefore, fearlessly 'tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King; and that it is He who hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved; and how that He shall judge the people righteously.'

Still we see very darkly into those dispensations of Omnipotence, which we call 'judgments.' They are either in kind, or degree, or mode of operation, something which we cannot comprehend. That which we do know respecting them is this: they are, to all appearance, visitations of extensive evil and destruction, of either a moral or physical nature, proceeding unexpectedly, though perhaps gradually, and by means, it may be, perfectly intelligible, from the hand of God.

With respect to individuals, those afflictions are improperly called 'judgments,' which may be merely instances of trial or discipline, or even of highly beneficial example. As there has been revealed to us a future state of retribution, where every man 'will receive according to that he hath done;' and as the secrets of the heart are open to God alone, it must be ever a presumptuous want of charity so to judge another, as to assert in any case that he has fallen under the direct and manifest wrath of God. That which we call judgment, may in that instance be the medium or instrument of the greatest spiritual good.

I. And this presents us with a distinction, well worthy of our consideration. Although in extensively fatal *accidents*, as they are termed, we shall do well to apply the question of our Saviour with respect to the Galileans slaughtered by Pilate, and the eighteen crushed by the tower in Siloam, yet we can seldom err in calling those evils which visit a *nation*, by the name of 'judgments.' We may justly consider *them* as the penalty and correctives of a people's sin. For, as such collective bodies may have national iniquities of a flagrant kind, and as they can exist in that collective capacity of sinning *as nations*, only in this world, we may conclude that such wide visitations of evil are nothing less than national chastisements, or a general penal discipline of the people so afflicted. Still their object is always some ultimate good. This good may be secured by working in them 'that godly sorrow' for their sins, which, by producing true repentance, averts the anger of an offended God. Or these judgments may, by breaking down the stubbornness of the rebellious heart by scenes of continued havoc and misery and devas-

tation, as it were, in spite of their hardness and unbelief, force upon them the salutary conviction that they have fallen into the hands of the Living God.

II. When the course of things around us proceeds smoothly and uninterruptedly, it generally produces that supineness, and security, and forgetfulness of God, which in nations as well as individuals, are the characteristics of great prosperity. But when once 'the Lord hath made bare His holy arm,' when once He begins to 'visit for these things,' then the eyes of all begin to be turned upward, and men's hearts are observed to 'fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.' Fear does that which the mercies of God could not effect. They do at last 'learn righteousness.' They are *obliged* to reflect; they are compelled to open their eyes. The pride of man sinks: he sees that 'there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel *against* the Lord.' He feels at length his real littleness and insignificance; he is conscious of his complete dependence; and that responsibility under which he had been so long impatient, and as it were restive, he now acknowledges with terror and abasement.

III. (1.) The perversion of great wealth in a life of dissipation and voluptuousness, idleness and uselessness, as it is a spectacle by no means uncommon, so it is a most offensive and insulting sight in the eyes of Him 'who maketh poor and who maketh rich.' We can scarcely imagine a greater affront to that God 'who maketh us to differ,' than the more than waste, the *abuse*, of such powers of good to our fellow-creatures.

(2.) Another great and crying sin is 'the love of money:' that which the Apostle calls 'the root of all evil,' and, by another name, the most offensive to a jealous God, who claims for Himself and His service the powers of the mind, the strength of the body, and the yearnings of the heart; namely, 'idolatry.' It is habitual covetousness, which early blights and mildews the tender shoots of religion in the breast, hardens every finer feeling, and concentrates every thought and care and wish upon self.

(3.) Another alarming sin of our country is pride; that sin by which the angels fell. It is the nature of this besetting vice of the human heart to lose sight of the Giver of all good things; to ascribe all to its *own* merits and exertions; to fancy itself capable of any, or all attainments; to ask no advice; to profit by no experience; to 'boast itself in the multitude of its riches.'

(4.) This leads me next to our ingratitude, to our utter thanklessness for all that we have had, for all that we enjoy; to that hardiness of impiety which presumes to assert that we have hitherto been prosperous, not in consequence but in spite of our long-tried and

heaven-blest institutions, and would now sunder the cable which has bound us fast to the haven of peace and safety, and send us forth at once to the mercy of the conflicting elements on a perilous voyage of discovery in untried seas and cheerless regions.

National sins are, after all, the collective vices of individuals; and, individually considered, every man has, besides those I have enumerated, his own peculiar sins, which must weigh also upon his country's welfare. For the removal therefore of judgments we must look to the correction of individual character. Men are too apt to forget that each of their vices adds to the general mass, the sum-total, of their country's iniquity. If God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss among us; if His destroying angel were sent amongst us; would he, let us in all sincerity ask ourselves, find any that might stay his arm?—would he find any prepared to meet their God?'—any waiting their Lord's coming?—These are questions for us to put home to our own hearts this day. A. B. EVANS,

Sermons on the Christian Life and Character, p. 396.

Death and Judgment.

With my soul have I desired thee in the night: yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. ISAIAH XXVI. 9.

THE judgments recorded in the Old Testament by the special inspiration of God, showing them to be as common centres, retribution on the sons of men, are intended to lead us to the belief in the final judgment after death, of which we read in the New Testament. These early judgments of nations and states were the shadows, the going before of the awful time when all mankind shall appear to receive the sentence with its eternal consequences for good or for evil, for blessing or for suffering.

I. In this passage we see the power of religion in sustaining the soul of man under the awfulness of divine retribution and the expectation of God's anger on the sins of the world; we see the expression, by those who have passed through such a time, set before us as indications of the mind which we are to cherish, and the hopes we may entertain in view of the final and future judgment, and it shows the power of religious faith to maintain the soul in peace against the great fears which darkened the soul of man—death and final judgment.

II. First, the fear of death. Most people know what is meant by that. It is to go forth alone, unaccompanied, in perfect solitude. Nature shrinks from this aspect of the awful crisis. Yet there is a greater fear than that of which I am speaking—the thought of

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

Advent Offerings.

He brought him to Jesus. S. John i. 42.

THIS day has a twofold character, and urges a double claim on our attention. For while the sounds of Advent are ringing in our ears, while the season itself speaks to us of the 'Voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God,' the 'great white throne,' and Him that sitteth thereon; while now the thought of the Judgment-day begins to stir our hearts, we are bidden pause for a brief interval, take up the high festal strain, and, mingling our sobered services with the song of praise, rejoice with, and return thanks for, those whose warfare is accomplished, whose iniquity is for ever pardoned, who have received that 'Crown of Life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.'

I. In the first place, of what does Advent speak? Is it not of the great and terrible day of the Lord, the coming of the Son of Man to purge His floor and gather His wheat into the garner, and to burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable? What scene does it bring before our eyes? Is it not the open graves, and the sea giving up the dead that are in it, and small and great standing before the throne of God, and the books opened, and the welcoming of the blessed, and the terrible voice of most just judgment, and the wailings of the lost?

Surely this is a very bitter thought, bitter even to the holy. Nay, I believe that in proportion as a man is holy, he will feel it the more. If there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, must there not be some deep grief for those who are lost? Or do we not remember that awful moment when the Lord Jesus Himself wept over the city of Jerusalem? Yea, He the all-perfect, the all-pure, the all-obedient, wept, when He looked upon the bloody city, and foresaw its end. And so, if our hearts be right in the sight of God, if we love the Lord, if we have hope, if we know the Gospel, shall we learn to pity and mourn over the reckless sinner, when we remember wherefore God made him, and what he is, when we think of the bliss of heaven, and the fearfulness of the sinner's end.

II. And now, with these thoughts fresh in our mind, let us consider briefly the general history of that holy Apostle, whom we

commemorate this day, and whose character seems most aptly fitted to help us here. 'John,' says the Evangelist, 'stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!' The two disciples, taught doubtless by the holy Baptist to look for Christ, heard Him speak, and at once they left their master's side, and 'followed Jesus.' 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day. One of the two which followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.'

These few words give us all we know, all we need to know, of his conversion. We have a picture of two lowly men following One still lowlier to a lowly house. The door opens. They enter in with Him. A few hours of conversation follow, and they are His.

And now we look to see how the Gospel leaven works within him, what peculiar characteristic it brings out, what his especial excellency, what office more particularly lies before him 'in the kingdom of Christ and of God.' Nor need we look far. 'He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, The Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.' This, you see, is his very first act. He goes, as driven by an uncontrollable instinct, to seek his brother. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon him,' and he cannot but prophesy.

And is not this the highest and most blessed of works? To watch over, and win souls, and bring them to the Lord;—what is this but most closely to imitate Him, who 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many?' Is it not natural to all who are themselves enlightened with His Holy Spirit, to 'go and tell what great things the Lord has done for' them? Is it not even the natural impulse of all true loving hearts to yearn after their brethren's conversion? While Advent bids us think of the Judgment-day, not only as it affects ourselves, but, in their degree, all mankind, our brethren, S. Andrew teaches us, that 'knowing the terrors of the Lord, we strive to persuade men,' before it is too late, to 'turn' themselves 'and live.'

III. But you will ask, How shall I do this? How can I, a private man, a lone woman, a tradesman, an apprentice, not a clergyman, or one whose work is in these things, how am I to convert my brethren?

(1) It is not very difficult to answer this question. First, recognise the duty; this is where most of us seem to fail. We do not feel that our neighbour's condition is anything to us. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' are—were it not that, as we know, Cain said it—the very words with which we should be inclined to answer any one who suggested this duty to us.

(2) But *how* shall it be done? Let us learn from S. Andrew's history. 'He findeth his own brother.' 'Philip was of Bethsaida,

the city of Andrew and Peter.' 'Philip findeth Nathanael.' Let us follow this up. It is always best to do something definite. Therefore begin by considering what lies close to you. Make up your minds that you will win over to Christ some one or two of those who seem most likely to be won, and who are most directly thrown in your way. Take as your charge a brother, a sister, a husband, a parent, a neighbour, and as the opportunity presents itself, urge them quietly, humbly, not in any domineering or self-righteous spirit, to take up the Cross of Christ. I said, as the opportunity presents itself. It will not be long, generally speaking, before such occur:—illness, losses, and the like will soften the hard heart, and break up the fallow ground. Your kind and gentle attention will procure you a hearing, your consistent life will carry conviction, and sooner or later you will surely win.

W. J. BUTLER,

Warnings of Advent, p. 67.

Preaching a Preparation for Christ's Advent

Behold, I will send My Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me.
MALACHI iii. 1.

THERE is, so to say, a great sameness in the history of the world. The dispensations of God are various and yet very similar, just as there is a likeness amongst all the children of men, though no two individuals are identical in the minute features of character. The history of nations, which is in fact the history of God's government, is full of repetitions. In the rise and fall of all the great empires there is traceable the same process, slower or speedier, more or less palpable, according to accidental circumstances. So in the Bible it is ever the same tale of human depravity, divine long-suffering, and ultimate vengeance. The annals of the life of one man are in many respects the annals of the entire species; the career of great cities and empires is a miniature of the career of the whole earth, their catastrophe a foreshadowing of the final revelation of Almighty vengeance, in which sin shall be crushed for ever. Sometimes there are several fulfilments of the same prophecy, each successive one more adequately coming up to the measure of the inspired language.

Now, if this be a true principle, we may expect to find it exemplified in the case of the two advents of the Son of God. The first advent will be a foreshadowing of the second; the circumstances of the first may be taken as a means of anticipating the circumstances of the last. Accordingly, the sacred writers repeatedly speak of both comings of Christ in the same words,—words which are only

partially applicable to the coming in humility, eighteen hundred years ago, and which await their thorough accomplishment in the awful circumstances of His return at the last.

This analogy between the two advents of Christ is very fully kept in view in the proper services of our Church at the present season. You will notice that the two events are always brought into juxtaposition; they are, in short, two different exhibitions of the same great act,—'God visiting the earth.' The collect for this week suggests one remarkable point of coincidence between the circumstances of Christ's first and second advent, which we desire to make the subject of meditation to-night; we pray that as John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way before Christ at His former coming, so the ministers of His body, the Church, may prepare the world for His next appearing. John the Baptist and his work were typical of the characters and work of the Christian priesthood: what was sung concerning him in prophetic strain of old had a broader meaning as referred to the stewards of Christ's mysteries now. What he did with a single voice, crying in the desert of Judæa, is being done on a larger scale by the whole company of the preachers in the moral wilderness to which Satan has reduced this lower creation. Consider first the fact of a preparation going on for Christ's last advent; secondly, to the instrumentality by which that preparation is made.

I. It is a most solemn view of the present state of the world, seldom taken by mankind, yet none the less true because rarely recognised, viz., that everything that occurs is in preparation for Christ's second coming.

The last coming of the Son of Man is the point to which all now tends; the revolutions of evil governments, the successive changes in the habits and manners of mankind, all bear in one direction; the struggles of order and misrule, the counter-efforts of religion and infidelity, the antagonism of monarchy and democracy as recorded in the chronicles of nations, or as occurring before our own eyes, will all issue and be found at last to have had a bearing upon the Son of God's appearing.

But what is the preparation thus asserted to be going on? In what does it consist? To whom does it refer? It is not so hard to find reasons sufficient to account for the deferring the time of Christ's first advent. But what end can we conceive to be answered by God's present delay? Why is the weary warfare between the Church and the world suffered still to linger out?—the enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent permitted still to develop itself? Why are the saints on earth left still to battle with the kingdom of evil, in fastings often, in watchings often? Why are those who sleep in Jesus detained still from the full consummation of their bliss; safe

housed indeed in green pastures, and by waters of comfort, but not yet admitted to the joys which are at God's right hand? From His servants here below, and from those delivered from the burden of the flesh, the same prayer unceasingly ascends to the Lord of the living and the dead; 'Thy kingdom come' is the reiterated cry of those on this side the grave, and from those beyond the flood is heard in apocalyptic vision the solemn antiphon, 'How long, O Lord! how long dost Thou delay?'

(1) First, the victory of Christ over Satan is hereby more thoroughly demonstrated. The devil, says an old writer, was to be subdued, not by the *might*, but by the *long-suffering* of God; the powerlessness of an adversary is more completely shown by permitting him to try every device and to fail, than by checking him in the outset, and preventing him from exhausting fruitlessly his resources. The inability of the ocean to override the bulwarks of the land has been more clearly proved by the ebb and flow of the tides of six thousand years, than it would have been had the waters been dried up after the first tempest; their innate feebleness is, we say, better revealed by suffering them to put forth their utmost strength again and again, but in vain. And so with the enemy of mankind: the Incarnation of Christ re-introduced Divine grace into the world; the Church of Christ is the kingdom or creation of grace, as opposed to the natural creation.

(2) Again, the 'preparation' now being made may be connected with the angels of heaven: the angels are to be present at, and to take part in, the solemnities of the second advent; they are the witnesses before whom Christ will confess His true servants, and disown the false-hearted. And there is warrant in Scripture for believing that the holy angels are even now being prepared for this, their lofty office, by the advancing course of this lower world; 'to the intent,' says S. Paul, 'that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places may be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.' He asserts that the thrones and dominions of the eternal world are taught and instructed by the Church below.

II. We have yet, however, to allude to the immediate instrumentality by which this preparation is made. The progress of events in general is preparation, but there is a more particular instrument acting upon these events to which our thoughts are to be directed. This special instrumentality is the preaching of the Gospel. 'Behold,' it is said in the text, 'I send my messenger before me!' as John for His first advent, so the preachers of the Gospel for His second, prepare the way of the Lord. But in what manner? It is this which we have to consider.

The preaching of the Gospel includes the whole ministerial work,

and thus understood it is not difficult to see how that preaching prepares Christ's way before Him. Ancient men have thought that the existence of the world is prolonged until, by the grace of God, souls have been saved equal in number to the angels that fell. If it be so, why then every additional spirit that is disciplined by Christ's ambassadors for heaven speeds His coming. Even as years roll on, and the Church augments, and the spiritual kingdom becomes thronged with tens of thousands of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, God in silence and in secrecy sets His seal upon those who walk before Him in sincerity and truth; when the number of the sealed is complete, then cometh the end. And it is by the means of grace stored up within the Church that souls are fitted for that awful impress. Surely then is the preaching of the Gospel Christ's messenger preparing His way before Him.

BISHOP WOODFORD,
Warnings of Advent, p. 147.

Successors of Elijah.

And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. LUKE i. 17.

SUCH was the description given by the angel to Zacharias of the great office which was to be filled by the son who should, in God's providence, be wonderfully born to him; and we recognise these words at once as the substance of the collect for this Third Sunday in Advent, composed two and a quarter centuries ago by that great liturgical scholar, Bishop Cosin, of Durham. The words themselves, in the mouth of the angelic messenger, are almost a literal quotation from the last page of the Old Testament: 'Behold,' cries Malachi, as he closes his volume of prophecy, 'I will send you Elias the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.' We know what hold that prediction took of the Jewish mind, how it echoed through the vacant centuries which parted the two dispensations, how men stood ready with address to the very first who gave promise of renewing the long-broken succession of the prophets, 'Art thou Elias?' They looked for the actual reappearance of that strange, weird figure which had once been so suddenly projected upon the page of their national history, and as suddenly withdrawn. In some way, this unique and startling mission

of his was to be repeated, and in an age of widespread degeneracy and apostasy the work was to be done over again which it had been given to the Tishbite to do.

I. It seems to be the law of God's spiritual government that men armed with the spirit and power of Elijah should be raised up when error and iniquity are at their height to deliver a protest on behalf of truth and righteousness to which the world shall be compelled to listen. And thus, again and again in the course of history, the tide of evil has been turned, or the reign of evil arrested by those on whom the mantle of the great prophet has conspicuously fallen—rough, earnest, strong-willed men, who will neither mince their words nor stand upon courtesies, but will carry all before them in the might of intense, over-powering conviction. The Baptist is not the only Elias which 'was for to come.' He had his successors through the Christian centuries. Can we not see one, for example, in the great Alexandrian bishop who, when the simplicity of Christian belief, in the person and nature of Christ, was in imminent danger of being wrecked and lost in the midst of Oriental subtlety, stood up in the midst of a host opposed to Christendom—'*Athanasius contra mundum*'—and set the faith of the Church once more firm on the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God? Do we not recognise another in the great Christian orator of Antioch and Constantinople, Chrysostom—sternest of ascetics and boldest and most eloquent of preachers, before whom the profligate courtiers of the empire trembled, 'as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come'? Can we not see yet another in the person of that wonderful man who was raised up eleven centuries later, when a darkness of superstition that could almost be felt was settling down upon European Christianity, and the Church of Rome, with her trade in indulgences and her claim to universal supremacy, which one of her greatest popes had denounced as the claim of an antichrist, was riveting her chains upon the consciences of men? Then it was that the great German reformer arose and wrought the great spiritual emancipation which is our priceless heritage, and told all men that their souls were free, that neither pope nor priest could shut them out from heaven, or bar the right of access which each may claim through Christ to God.

And yet again, is it too much to say that the prophet had another successor among ourselves? Surely it was in his spirit and power that the great revival was wrought in the last century, to which we trace so much of what is best in our modern English Christianity. It was John Wesley who, when the Church seemed, like another Sardis or Laodicea, to have only a name to live when it was dead; when clergy and laity were sunk alike in a fatal lethargy; touched the deepest fount of the religious life and bade men arise from sleep

that Christ might give them light. These are the great instruments of whom God makes use, age after age, to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just—the men of irresistible inspirations who cannot be ignored—the voices crying in the wilderness of a sinful society who compel a hearing as they bid men 'flee from the wrath to come.'

II. *Preparers of the Way.*—A very awful thing to realise that we—the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries—are assumed to be doing at all times work of the same kind as Elijah and his great successors. We have been offering to-day the prayer that we may have grace to do it. We erect before ourselves the pattern of the Forerunner who prepared the way for the first coming of Christ, and we say, 'Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way.' This, then, is our work. It is to nothing less than this tremendous office that we are set apart—to fit men to stand before Christ at His appearing, and all other views of our duty pale before this. All other titles which ordained men can bear are less significant than that which Christ Himself has given us: 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me.' The teacher who is touched with the divine fire which glowed in an Elijah and a John the Baptist alone finds his way to the hearts of sinful men. We can speak of personal joy and peace in believing, of the nearness of a Father to us in all dangers and sorrows, of the security pledged to those who are followers of that which is good, of the delight of leaning upon the love of Christ, of the great and blessed privilege of feeding by faith upon Christ, of the comfort of the Holy Ghost, of the courage that faith inspires, of the calm happiness that crowns the life of obedience. We can point to examples full of hope and encouragement of saints who have gone before. We can tell of the perfect work of patience that we have witnessed and so bid others persevere.

III. *The Nature of the Ministry.*—This is the Sunday on which the subject of the Christian ministry is specially commended to our thought and prayers. But Christianity called into existence quite a new order of messengers. It gathered, as it were, up into one all the former ways of spiritual agencies—cleansing the impure, rejecting the counterfeit, reinforcing and concentrating the true. The idea of a great ministry of reconciliation with all its subordinate ministries and offices, the idea of a distinct use of human life, of the formal dedication of it to a perpetual aggression upon the sin and ignorance in the world—the idea of a call and mission to teach, to comfort, to warn, to lift up the souls of men, and bring them into conscious communion with Christ, and into meetness for His presence in the life beyond—all this dates from the Day of Pentecost. Till then it

had no existence. The first great example of it is to be found in the career of the wise masterbuilder of the Christian Church, the Apostle S. Paul. That ministry of which he, once for all, settled the standard, and which he so nobly illustrated, has for ages been embodied in the organisation of the Church of Christ, and we have become so familiar with it that we can hardly conceive of a time when it did not exist.

Still, as at the first, 'our sufficiency is of God.' The work is His; the commission is His. Our true position is summed up in the quaint old mediæval question and answer, '*Quid es? Ego nihil et omnia.*' 'What art thou? Nothing in thyself, everything in Him.' And therefore we say to you for whose sake we exist, 'Brethren, pray for us.'

CANON DUCKWORTH,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xl. p. 392.

The Church Bearing Witness.

But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me that the Father hath sent Me. S. John v. 36.

THE preparations which Christ makes for His second coming are by means of His appointed ministers; and we are taught in the Epistle for to-day in what light we are to regard them. Although faithfulness to their high charge is everything to themselves, yet we are not to judge them. We are not indeed to judge one another, much less those who by God Himself are set over us. To their own Master they stand or fall. Even of the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees our Lord said that as sitting in Moses's seat they were to be obeyed, although their bad example was to be avoided; much more then must it be the case with those who sit, not in the seat of Moses, but, as it were, in that of Christ; to whom He Himself hath said after His Resurrection, 'As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.'[1]

I. 'Let a man so account of us,' says S. Paul, 'as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.' Let Him look upon us as Christ's servants, to whom is intrusted the dispensation of His gifts to His household the Church. 'Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment.' Of man's 'day' it is in the marginal reading, for man has his 'day' and his 'judgment' as God also has His. Nay more, although that judgment of men were in some degree informed by the Spirit of God, yet it is of little moment; for even that voice in our own hearts must be confirmed by the final judgment of Christ. 'Yea,' says S. Paul,

[1] S. John xx. 21.

'I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself;' or, although I am not conscious of any known sin in myself, any want, that is, of ministerial faithfulness, 'yet am I not hereby justisfied, but He that judgeth me is the Lord.' I must still wait a higher decision.

'Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' Not only the secret deeds of wickedness, but the intentions and thoughts—both of which are now unknown to man—will then be brought forth to await the sentence of God; 'the Day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.'[1] 'And then,' adds the Apostle, 'shall every man have praise of God;' or rather, 'and then the praise which shall accrue to every man shall be only that which is of God,' there will be then no praise but His, no mistake, no false estimate. To this, therefore, the minister of Christ is himself to look, and to direct the eyes of all men; they are not to judge him, neither is he to be moved by their judgment; but both are to wait for the return of that Master from whom alone he has received his stewardship, and been made the shepherd of His sheep; minister and people, people and minister, both are to wait the one great approval. Such is the lesson of the Epistle for to-day.

II. Let us then next consider the Gospel for to-day. 'Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' There is no intimation given us in the Gospels whether the Baptist himself had any doubts or not, and therefore it may be well that we should leave the question undecided as Scripture has left it. As S. Paul 'became weak that he might gain the weak,' so the holy Baptist appears as if he himself were doubting in order that he might confirm the faith of others. He could no longer point out the Lamb of God to them as he had done, nor rejoice in hearing His voice; but those who were most attached to him, and who were ready to do anything for his sake, he could thus induce to hear the Bridegroom's voice, that hearing they might know, and with their own eyes behold Him who was 'fairer than the children of men,' and whose lips were 'full of grace.'

They came and beheld His wonderful works, the manifestation of God—for many miracles were wrought at the same hour—and thus their inquiry was, as it were, already answered before they had spoken. The works of our Blessed Lord contain the manifestation of God to His sinful creatures; they show us what God is; that 'God is love,' else we could not approach Him; and if there is anything left in the

[1] Rom. ii. 16.

corrupt heart of man capable of amendment they must reach it. Not in the whirlwind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in the still small voice of human condescensions, of God made Man, whispering to the secret spirit of forgiveness and peace. To see God in Jesus Christ, and not to love Him, this itself is condemnation. And yet what is the evil which Satan works in the heart of fallen man but this, that the very sight of Divine goodness is an offence to him? Therefore, to this very description of His works our Lord adds that very mysterious and remarkable expression, 'And blessed is *he* whosoever shall not be offended in Me.'

But, again, there is another point to be considered in the Gospel for to-day. Those whom Christ hath sent to prepare the way for His coming 'receive not honour from men;' their faith may be doubted of men; they may leave their very name under a cloud; but Christ at His coming shall confess their name before men; shall bear witness to them as they have confessed His name, and borne witness to Him among men. And so was it now with His first messenger and herald, the holy Baptist.

I. WILLIAMS,
The Epistles and Gospels, vol. i. p. 21.

The Church in the World.

Ye are the light of the world. S. Matt. v. 14.

IT is worth while for a moment to glance at the context of Christ's words; we see there better what He meant. 'A city set on a hill cannot be hid.' Travellers tell us that from the Mount of Beatitudes, where our Lord was sitting, there could be seen straight before Him, high on the sky-line, perched on a ledge of rock, an ancient fortress, where now the town of Safed stands; and the illustration is the more striking because such a situation is rare in Galilee. Again, 'men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel' (or a bushel *measure*; it was a common household vessel, used for measuring grain), but put it 'on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house'—'Let *your* light shine before men.'

Now, there are several thoughts here which we may gather into order.

I. The Church, the outward human society of Christ in the world, *cannot be hid.* There it is before the eyes of men; in the full open of publicity it must live its life, and bear its witness, and deliver its message, and endure such criticism as may come. So its Lord had lived and taught; it was His own unanswered challenge, 'I spake

openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing;' 'Ask them which heard Me;' 'Which of you convinceth Me of sin?'

So, too, the individual Christian. He, too, must live in the open; he, too, must come under the world's judgment.

II. Nor is this position of the Christian, and of the Church, the aggregate body of Christians accidental, but *intentional*. They do not happen to be 'on the hill,' 'on the candlestick;' they are placed there; placed there on purpose that they may shine—'give light to all that are in the house,' be 'the light of the world.'

III. Again, the light of the Church and of the Christian is not their own. It was not Peter and John and Paul that illumined their age and succeeding ages, but Christ in S. Peter and S. John and S. Paul. One of them wrote, 'It is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me;' and again, to Christians generally, 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' Nor is this true merely of exalted Christians in conspicuous positions. The moon which makes our nights beautiful is, we are told, but an old worn-out world, without inhabitant, without atmosphere, with no light of its own; yet, as it lights the traveller on his way and the mariner over the seas, who shall say it is useless? It can, at least, reflect to us the light of the sun, when that sun is out of sight. So truly many a dull life, a worn-out or obscure and seemingly useless creature, can serve to reflect the light of His holiness, whom at present the world cannot see.

IV. And yet another thought. This light of Christ shining through men and women in the world is *indestructible*. 'The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not' (or, 'laid no hold upon it'). Whatever else those debatable words of S. John mean, this certainly is one reasonable meaning; that while, indeed, the light did not at once dispel the darkness, yet the darkness could not close in upon, so as to enwrap and overwhelm the light. There it was, that light of God, in the midst of the dark world; and the darkness, if not dispelled by it, at least could not quench the light. So if the light in you is the light of Christ, Christ's spirit, Christ's temper, Christ's life, it cannot be put out by the surrounding darkness. This is your power, the weakest of you, if only you will draw your light from Christ, and then let that light shine.

E. J. GOUGH,
The Religion of the Son of Man p. 47.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

Responsibility.

Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. DAN. v. 27.

I. BELSHAZZAR knew—*there* was his sin: it was against his knowledge. There were three features of it, I think.

He knew the reality of Jehovah's being, and that He ruled in the kingdom of men, and yet he defied that Almighty power, and trusted in the strength and security of his city to save him from the besieging foe.

Again, he knew that sharp lesson taught to his father—of the peril of human pride.

It may be, indeed, that there was another aspect to his sin. Though he knew the truth himself, yet perhaps his lords and courtiers still held by their heathen deities. Was this act of his a bid for their support, an encouragement to their flagging courage in the hour of national peril? Was this act done, that is to say, from motives of policy and expediency—this honour to gods that he knew were false, this insult to the God that he knew was true? At any rate, we have surely enough here on which to found a most serious lesson concerning the moral responsibility of our human life.

II. Knowledge must be the first element in the balance of judgment, where an intelligent being renders his account to a Personal God. '*Thou knewest all this!*'—that is the indictment. Nor is that knowledge necessarily or primarily the consequence of revelation. S. Paul, at heathen Lystra and at scholastic Athens, appealed to an intuitive knowledge of a Personal God, witnessed to by the world of nature in the one case, and by the consciousness of the human mind in the other—a sense of personal responsibility for what he does and for what he *is*, to One higher than himself.

III. Are there not, even in Christians' lives, phases of sin of Belshazzar's sort?

'It sometimes seems,' said the late Dr. Pusey, in one of his Oxford sermons, 'as if the impious flattery of the Roman poet, when the weather cleared in the morning for the imperial spectacle—"*With Jove, divided empire Cæsar sways*"—were the religion of Christians, and that, over ourselves at least, we hold a partnership of jurisdiction with Almighty God.'

(2) Nor are we Christians wholly free from Belshazzar's second and more presumptuous sin: 'Bring hither the vessels of the house of God!' We have many of these in our keeping, and we are responsible for their use. And for the use of all these sacred capacities I am *responsible*; in regard to them all, God shall bring me into judgment; concerning them all, His hand writes on the wall of my life, 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting.'

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Responsibility! Yes, it *is* the heavy weight with which all human life is charged—the price of the freedom of our will. But *who* would desire to escape its burden, if by that very pressure it throws us in upon the uncreated Love; if it leads us in the end to the truth, the liberty, the satisfaction to which those great words of S. Augustine point: 'My God, Thou hast made me for Thyself; and my heart can find no rest, until it find rest in Thee?'

E. J. GOUGH,
The Religion of the Son of Man, p. 25.

Trial by Fire

The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1 CORINTHIANS iii. 13.

I. OF whom was the Apostle thinking when he wrote the warning words about the spiritual builder who employed wood and hay and stubble in his work? Not, we may be very sure, of Apollos himself, for when S. Paul wrote these words Apollos was at his side at Ephesus, and, so far as we know, on terms with him of perfect friendship and confidence, and only once in his later writings does the Apostle refer to him, and the terms in which he does so—it is in his Epistle to Titus—forbid the idea that there can have been any such failure in his work as a Christian teacher as the words before us would imply. But it is very possible that the eager adherents of Apollos had deserved the apostolical censure which is conveyed by the words. They had been powerfully impressed by the brilliant Alexandrian, by his knowledge of what was being said and thought in the Greek world, by his skill in setting out what he had to say to the very best advantage. They were—after the manner of disciples—more eager to imitate their master's methods than careful to be true to the end he had in view; and so it would seem likely that S. Paul had them, or some of them, in his eye throughout those striking paragraphs in the First Epistle to the Corinthians in which he treats of the Gospel as the true philosophy or wisdom of God, the wisdom which set forth Jesus Christ crucified as the remedy for the sins and sorrows and errors of mankind, in contrast to the wisdom or philosophy of this world, which had no end beyond its poor and thin and vapid self, save the credit of its originators and promoters. That some of these younger Apollonists, so to call them, should in their teaching have mixed up hay and wood and stubble with more precious things, was probable enough. 'The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is'—that was the note of solemn warning which the Apostle sounded. 'Take care,' he seems to say to the young men who were trading on the great name and authority

of Apollos, 'take care what you are doing with these souls at Corinth. Are you only interesting and amusing them for a few of the passing days of time, or are you building up in them a faith which will enable them to face death and eternity? What are the materials of the structure within those souls which you are raising, are they the gold, the silver, the precious stones of the apostolic faith? No doubt they are, but do they not also include materials of a different kind, less valuable, less durable—wood, hay, and stubble? If this be so, a time is coming when all, the precious and worthless alike, will be submitted to a serious test, the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

II. What was this fire? The Apostle has told us that he was thinking chiefly of the day of Christ's appearing. 'The day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire.' Or, as he writes to the Thessalonians, 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire.' The Apostle, then, is not here thinking of any fire which will outlast the Judgment, such as the fire of hell; nor yet of any that will precede the Judgment. It is a fire that will environ the Judge, in which He will be manifested, a fire which will search and probe every man's work, testing its inmost qualities, playing harmlessly round all that is solid and enduring, but withering up into a thin cinder all that is frivolous and unsubstantial. This is no doubt the Apostle's meaning. But He, who at the end will judge us once for all, is now and always judging us, and His perpetual presence among us as our Judge, constantly probing, trying, sifting us, is revealed by events and circumstances which have on our souls the effect of fire. They burn up that which is worthless; they leave that which is solid unscathed. There are many events and circumstances which act on us in this way; it will be enough to consider one or two of them.

(1) There is the searching, testing power of a new and responsible position, of a situation forcing its occupant to make a critical choice, or to withstand a strong pressure. Such a new position discovers and burns up all that is weak in a man's faith or character. The Greeks had a stern proverb to the effect that a position of leadership shows what a man is, and the real drift of that saying was that in practice it shows too often what he is not. It implies that generally the pending discovery will be unfavourable, that the test of high office would, in a majority of cases, bring to light something that is weak and rotten in the character which in private life might have escaped detection. History is strown with illustrations of this truth.

(2) And as with states so with churches—with particular branches, that is, of the Christian Church, though not with the Church Universal, which has a promise of indefectibility: 'The gates of hell

shall not prevail against it.' A church may be to all appearance highly favoured; it may have leaders conspicuous for holiness or learning, it may reckon its multitudes of devout communicants, its flourishing missions at home and abroad, its many works of benevolence and mercy, and yet it may have admitted to its bosom some false principles, whether of faith or morals, which will find it out in the day of trial. There is one solemn instance of this, one at least in Christian antiquity. In the early centuries no church was more highly favoured than that of Northern Africa. Among its teachers were names as great as, one greater than, any other in post-apostolic Christendom—Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine. It had, says Posedius, almost innumerable churches; it produced saints and martyrs; its intellectual and practical activity was attested by a long series of councils. It was the first church, so far as we know, certainly it was earlier than any in Italy, to translate the New Testament Scriptures into the language of the West; it held its own in debate with the greatest churches in Europe—with Rome itself. The day of trial came on it with the invasion of the Aryan Vandals who surged round the walls of Hippo, as Augustine lay dying within; it came again and more decisively with the Moslem conquest. There are churches in the East which have suffered as much as, or more than, the Church of Northern Africa, churches which have never ceased to suffer, yet which to-day in their weakness are still instinct with life and with hope, but the Church of Cyprian and Augustine perished outright. We may guess at the cause; we cannot determine it. It may have been a generally lax morality among its people, it may have been a wide-spread spirit of paradox among its teachers; it may have been some far-reaching weakness or corruption which the day of account will alone reveal. But there is the fact, no church in primitive Christendom stood higher than the Church of Africa, none has ever so utterly disappeared. Let us of the Church of to-day, of the Church of England, be not high-minded but fear.

(3) But, if prominence and success do not discover what is weak in faith and character, there is an agent who comes to all sooner or later, and who will surely do so,—there is the fire, the searching, testing power of deep affliction. Many a creed that will do for the sunny days of life will not serve us in its deep shadows, still less in the valley of the shadow of death. In those great troubles which shake the soul to its depths, and which force it to ask itself what is really solid enough now to avail it, all withers away that does not rest, either immediately or by necessary inference, on divine authority. The truths which strengthen and brace character and enable it to pass unscathed, like the three holy children, through the fiery furnace of deep sorrow are the great certainties which were ever

to the front in the Apostles' teaching about God and man, about life and death, about sin and redemption, about nature and grace, above all about the boundless power and love of Jesus Christ our LORD and God. These solemn realities will stand us in good stead whatever the sorrows of life may be, and in that great day of which Advent reminds us, when we shall be seen as we are, when no secret defects will escape exposure, when no indulgence will be extended to moral rottenness only because it is found where all around is sound and fair. 'I will search Jerusalem with candles' is a saying which will be fulfilled at that day as never before. 'Many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? Then will I say unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me.'

H. P. LIDDON,

Family Churchman, Dec. 18, 1889.

The Last Days.

That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. 2 THESSALONIANS ii. 3.

VERY solemn, to the ear of faith, are all those deep notes of prophecy which foretell what shall be in the last days. Solemn in every age of the Church, the words and prophetic warnings seem to increase in solemnity as the ages roll by. Consider what Holy Scripture delivers concerning the great apostasy which shall usher in the end, and specially concerning the man of sin, the son of perdition, who is to be revealed before the final advent of Christ to judge the world.

Would we make the teaching of the Spirit practical, we shall—I. As knowing that we have no assurance that Antichrist will not come in our own day, survey his features attentively as they are given in God's word, in order that we may know him if we see him. And —II. If exaltation of self against and above God—if a blasphemous assumption of the privileges and prerogatives of the Godhead be a prime note of Antichrist, then let us look warily in the direction of Rome.

III. But thirdly, he is called the lawless one; and although superstition is ever near akin to unbelief, yet we must in fairness acknowledge that the licentiousness of speculation finds its most congenial atmosphere in other branches of the Church than the Roman. All may read the signs of the times, and must be aware that the nations of the north could contribute a feature to the man of sin, no less than those that dwell beyond the Alps.

IV. Lastly, keep these the great verities of faith, and suffer not the business or the calling, the family ties or the social duties, to elbow everything else clean out of your sight.

J. W. BURGON,
Ninety-One Short Sermons, No. 4.

The Ministry, its Duties and Snares.

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 1 PETER v. 2, 3.

IN the words before us, the Holy Spirit of God suggests to us what are the duties and what the snares connected with the pastoral office.

I. The figure of speech here used to denote the relation between Christ's ministers and His people is embodied in the very name by which we ordinarily express it when we speak of the *pastoral office*. The Psalmist speaks of his God under this endearing title when he says, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall lack nothing;' and as this designation was applied by the prophets to our Lord Jesus Christ, so did He assume it to Himself, saying, 'I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine;' and He, in issuing His commission to the Apostles, had said to this very S. Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?' 'Feed My sheep: Feed My lambs.' Therefore the Apostle was only handing on his divine Master's own words, when he said to his brethren in the ministry, 'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof;' and perhaps no more comprehensive words could be used in reference to the obligations of the pastoral relation. What indeed more does the flock require beyond feeding and oversight? for the first implies the ministration of all the means of grace; the second, that careful visitation and supervision through which evils are averted, and those means rendered effectual to each individual member of the flock. But how does the shepherd feed his flock? *he* does not make or give the food, he is merely the directing mind to lead his sheep towards it. God alone gives the food, whether it be natural or spiritual; God causes the tender herbage to grow, and waters it with the dews of heaven, and adapts it to the wants of His creatures; it is for them to avail themselves of it, and the use of the shepherd is to conduct them to their pasture. And so with the nourishment of the soul, Almighty God alone bestows it in sacraments and other subordinate means of feeding our spiritual life. We under Him are enjoined to feed His flock. He worketh His soul-converting, soul-feeding work, *in*, and

by, and *through* us. Hence S. Paul says, 'We therefore, as workers together with Him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.'

II. Thus much for our *administrative functions*. But there remains another large class of duties comprehended in the words 'taking the oversight thereof.' The good shepherd's office is not fulfilled in merely feeding his sheep; he has to care for them, to keep them together, to guard them from external dangers, to bring back those that wander from the fold, to seek them out when they are lost, to help them when they are weary and footsore, and to tend them in suffering and disease as opportunity offers· he is to make himself acquainted with them individually, to discern their several peculiarities, and adapt himself to their separate wants; and this is beautifully expressed by our Lord in His description of the true Shepherd, where He says, 'The sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out: and when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.' How mutual is the knowledge here described: the Shepherd knoweth His sheep individually, for He calleth them by name, and they Him, for they follow when they hear His voice.

III. Note the snares against which the Apostle, or rather the Spirit of wisdom and truth speaking through the Apostle, warns the elders of the Church. They are three in number: constraint, covetousness, and ambition or pride. 'Feed the flock of God; taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.' I do not say, that *all* our snares are contained under these heads; but of this we may be sure, that the *mention* of these sins is a proof that they are such as do most easily beset us.

(1) Then, we are to speak of constraint as opposed to willingness: 'not by constraint, but willingly.' Now I think that these words may be taken by us as a caution in the very outset of our ministerial career. They should suggest to us the sifting of our motives, even before we enter the sacred profession of the priesthood. Are men at liberty, think you, to choose *this*, just as they would any secular calling? are they to be swayed by the mere necessity of making a livelihood, putting *second* to this the awful question, which ought to be *first*, of how far they desire, and how far they are qualified, to take the oversight of immortal souls for whom Christ died, and whom God will surely require at their hands? There *is* indeed a constraint; but it is the constraint of love: as S. Paul says, 'The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were

all dead, and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.' There *is* a necessity; but it is the necessity of a single-hearted, elevated sense of duty, of a mind willing to spend and be spent for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

(2) Covetousness; 'not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.' Well may another Apostle say that 'the love of money is the root of all evil!' nay, that covetousness is idolatry; for it is the worship of self in its most sordid yet most subtle form, and it eats out of the heart all noble, generous zeal for God, and constitutes the whole of our external service a *lie*! It *is* a primary duty under any dispensation that men should worship God *with their substance*; but when offerings which ought, upon being made, to be consecrated *directly to Him* by presentation upon His altar, are perverted into mere perquisites and fees to His ministers, exacted with a rigid formality, and upon a uniform scale, instead of being left to the free will of the offerer, such a proceeding loses all its religious character; it makes no appeal to the offerer's conscience, or sense of gratitude for blessings bestowed, but simply assumes the form of a tax, and a very odious tax too. We must remember S. Paul's maxim, 'we seek not yours, but *you*.'

(3) But I have one more snare to speak of. The Apostle cautions us against aiming to be lords over God's heritage, but rather to be ensamples to the flock. The snare then here is *pride*, and this assails the highest class of minds: such as would scorn to be influenced by filthy lucre, and whose energy removes them from the charge of constraint. There is a risk of insensibly appropriating to one's-self the dignity that belongs to one's office, of presuming too much upon our position, and becoming high-minded and dictatorial. The love of power is a subtle snare, especially to superior minds and intellects; but the only real and safe way to gain influence over others is *not unduly to seek it*. If we *deserve* it, it will be accorded to us, and if not, we are better without it. We must remember then that our commission is one of service, not of dominion; and so our Lord has said, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so with you;' and, in the same spirit, the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians, 'Not that we would have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.'

R. LIDDELL,
Warnings of Advent, p. 213.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

Lying and Truth; the Old Man and the New.

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. COLOSSIANS iii. 9-11.

NO one can doubt that the Colossians were in danger of falling into the sin of which S. Paul warns them here. He had called them 'saints,' and 'faithful in Jesus Christ;' he says, in this very passage, that they 'had put off the old man with his deeds,' and had 'put on the new man;' they were actually, and in the fullest sense, Christians; yet he exhorts them, in plain terms, not to *lie*. And he does not limit his warning to lies that might be told to Jews or heathens in an hour of cowardice, for the purpose of escaping some terrible persecuting. He dreads lest they should lie *one to another*, lest they should deceive those who were baptized into the same Name with themselves, those whom they were calling brothers.

I. Why did he fear this? Because he had seen in others, and felt in himself, the temptation to lie; because he knew that no calculations of interest, no mere sentiment, none of the common arguments of religion, could secure any from yielding to it. A man has been told again and again that a falsehood must be brought to light at last, and that then come exposure and shame. All personal experience, all the history of the world, proves that this statement is true: but what power is in it? I have a strong present interest in colouring, distorting, setting at nought the truth. How can I tell that I shall be found out?

But *religious* motives, the fear of punishment hereafter, the hope of blessings hereafter, surely this should keep us from lying, though calculations about the inefficacy of falsehood, and the mere sense of the disgracefulness of it, may not. I should contradict all history, all daily experience, if I pretended that this influence for *this* purpose avails more than either of the others. Men have thought that they might tell lies, and act lies, for the sake of their souls. They have conceived the notion of lying for God. The religious man has all the same temptations to falsehood with the mere worldly calculator and the mere man of honour, and he has a certain set of temptations in a manner peculiar to himself, which may pull him down into a lower abyss than either of them can fall into, and against which he needs some mightier helper than his own religious notions, or feelings, or expectations.

II. This is what S. Paul felt and believed of himself and of the

Colossians; and therefore he said: 'Lie not one to another, seeing you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him.' He found no security against lying except in this. He did not appeal to the prudence which rejected it as foolish, or to the honour which rejected it as mean, or to the religious feeling which rejected it as perilous. But he led them back to their baptism; he bade them consider what that meant. It meant the renouncing the old selfish nature which was always prompting them to lie, because it was always prompting them to think that they had some interest different from their neighbours, that each man had come into the world to struggle with his fellows, and to supplant them, or to get money, or credit, or character, or heaven for himself. It meant the renunciation of this old self-seeking creature, which must be the source of lies because it is itself a lie, contradicting the whole order of human society, and the whole purpose of God. It meant the putting off of this false self, this image of the evil spirit which every man carries about with him. It meant that we have God's Spirit of truth given us, to work in us that we may speak true words, and do true acts, that we may be like Him who is truth, and in whom is no lie. It meant, therefore, a distinct denial of the fiction that we are separate creatures with separate and contradictory purposes in life, and must push others out of our way in order that we may win the prizes we are in search of.

III. It sounds strange and coarse to address a congregation in the nineteenth century with the words, 'Lie not one to another.' And yet there is surely not a congregation in this land at this time which does not need to hear this exhortation, which would not be better for receiving it in the simple straightforward Saxon form, which our translators have given to it, rather than in the vague diluted phraseology of the modern world.

Advent witnesses to us that He who is the Truth came into the world for this end—that he might bear witness to the truth. We want no new revelation. Either that which was made 1800 years ago was false always, or it is true now. It was either the announcement of the ground on which society has always stood, and must always stand, or it was a mockery. But it is a *revelation* still. We have need to preach it in the language in which the Apostle presented it to Corinthians and Colossians; we have need to apply it to the system and the details of English society, as they applied it to the systems and details of Greek, and Roman, and Jewish society. The Gospel must speak aloud in the salons, and say, 'Lie not one to another.' Make not the intercourse of life, which should be based on human sympathies, the means of cultivating a system of organised

deception where words are used to conceal and misrepresent thoughts, to create suspicion, to propagate scandal. The Gospel must speak aloud in the market-place, 'Lie not one to another.' The Gospel must say at the doors of the law courts, 'Lie not one to another.' Let us not use holy names, the words of God, for the purpose of slandering each other's intentions. Let us not make these holy names, these words of God, pretexts for condemning the evils which we have no interest in preserving, for concealing those which by-standers detect in our persons and professions. Let us not poison the very fountains of truth, which we are appointed to watch over.

F. D. MAURICE,
The Warnings of Advent, p. 1.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

The Preacher and his Office.

'THERE is always danger,' said Dean Hook, 'to those who have to talk much about religion that their religion may become that of the head, rather than the true religion of the heart. I have found it necessary myself to dedicate an hour or two at midnight to serious meditation, self-examination, and prayer.'

SPEAKING of art-training, Mr. Ruskin says: 'Until a man has passed through a course of academy studentship, and can draw in an improved manner with French chalk, and knows fore-shortening, and perspective, and something of anatomy, we do not think he can possibly be an artist. What is worse, we are very apt to think that we can *make* him an artist by teaching him anatomy, and how to draw with French chalk: whereas the real gift in him is utterly independent of all such accomplishments.' So the highest powers of the teacher or preacher, the power of interpreting the Scriptures with spiritual insight, of moving the hearers to earnest worship and decision, may exist with or without the culture of the schools. Learned Pharisees are impotent failures compared with a rough fisherman Peter anointed with the Holy Ghost. Inspiration is more than education.

KING OSWALD of Northumbria sent for missionaries from the monastery of Iona. The first one despatched in answer to his call obtained but little success. He declared on his return that among a people so stubborn and barbarous success was impossible. 'Was it

their stubbornness, or your severity?' asked Aidan, a brother sitting by: 'did you forget God's word to give them the milk first and then the meat?'

ABRAHAM LINCOLN once said: 'I can't bear to hear cut-and-dried sermons. No—when I hear a man preach I like to see him act as if he were fighting trees!' And he extended his long arms, at the same time suiting the action to the words.

DR. JOHN BROWN, speaking of a minister's leaving his people for another pastorate, says that he mentally exclaims, 'There they go! when next we meet it will be at the Judgment!'

. . . EXPERIENCE teaches us that those preachers who preach according to the light of faith have more influence upon souls than those who fill their discourses with human reasonings and philosophical arguments, because the light of faith is always accompanied by a certain spiritual unction which spreads secretly in the hearts of the hearers; and hence we can judge whether it is not necessary for ourselves as well as for others to accustom ourselves to follow always, and in all things, the light of faith.

ROWLAND HILL said: 'Noisy sermons remind one of a hailstorm upon pantiles: they make a deal of noise, but produce no impression.'

A FRIEND of the poet-clergyman, William Bowles, tells how he spent a Saturday evening at Bremhill Rectory, where Dr. Croly was also a guest, having come to preach the following day. Dr. Croly was remarkable for his powerful eloquence; while Mr. Bowles's style was characterised by simplicity. Lord Lansdowne was the most distinguished member of the village congregation. In the course of conversation, the good Rector suddenly exclaimed to the narrator, 'I hope your friend will not preach to the Marquis to-morrow, but to the peasantry.' The hint was not lost, as the eloquent preacher delivered a most pastoral and beautiful discourse, alike instructive to peer and ploughman.

SOME preachers, wrote Edward Irving, are traders from port to port, following the customary and approved course; others adventure over the whole ocean of human concerns. The former are hailed by the common voice of the multitude, whose cause they hold, the latter blamed as idle, often suspected of hiding deep designs, always derided as having lost all guess of the proper course. Yet, of the latter class of preachers was Paul the Apostle. . . . Such adventurers, under

God, this age of the world seems to us especially to want. There are ministers now to hold the flock in pasture and in safety, but where are they to make inroads upon the alien, to bring in the votaries of fashion, of literature, of sentiment, of policy, and of rank? . . . Where are they to lift up their voice against simony, and acts of policy, and servile dependence upon the great ones of this earth, and shameful seeking of ease and pleasure, and anxious amassing of money, and the whole cohort of evil customs which are overspreading the Church? Truly it is not stagers who take on the customary form of their office and go the beaten round of duty, and then lie down content; but it is daring adventurers, who shall eye from the grand eminence of a holy and heavenly mind all the grievances which religion underlies, and all the obstacles which stay her course, and then descend with the self-denial and faith of an apostle to set the battle in array against them.

Excelling God. Isaiah xxv. 1.

'Dr. Bellamy made God big,' said an old negro to Dr. Backus, his successor.

He is no true Christian who does not exalt Christ. A minister, whose congregation had long deplored the cold and dry style of his preaching, found on Sunday morning, on entering the pulpit, a slip of paper on the cushion with the words in John xii. 21 written on it: '*Sir, we would see Jesus.*' His conscience supplied the application of the text, and after much thought and self-examination he resolved, with God's help, to preach Christ more clearly; and next Sunday he took for his text John xx. 20: '*Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.*'

The Divine Fatherland. Isaiah xxv. 8.

An American minister thus speaks in one of his sermons: 'When the regiments of the British army are on foreign stations the bands are forbidden to play "Sweet Home," lest the beautiful tune, with its touching associations, should make the men saddened and disheartened. But no such effect is produced in the Christian soul by singing to him of heaven. On the contrary, it gives him joy, and contentment, and strength, and consolation. For this purpose I have spoken of it now to you. Is it a comfort? That will depend on whether or not you are a child of God. Hark! amid the darkness the clock strikes out, with booming sound, the long midnight hour, and as it is heard by the watchman on his weary beat, he rejoices that he is so much nearer the time of his release at the day-dawn. But as it falls on the ears of the condemned criminal in his cheerless cell, it sends a shiver through his frame, for he is an hour nearer execution on the morn. How is it with you and the ringing out of the old year in this regard? Does it fill you with gladness or

with dread? Oh, if with dread, let me urge you at once to break away from sin, and enter into the family of God, so that your terror may be turned into joy. They tell that in the armies of the first Napoleon, when the '*Ranz des vaches*' was played by the regimental bands, some Swiss soldier, under the influence of the old home tune, was sure to desert before the morning. Child of God, I have tried to move your heart by awaking within you the associations of your Divine Fatherland. I have sung to you the Christian home-song; and if you have enlisted into any army of sin, or shame, or cruelty, or wrong, may the effect upon you be, to cause you to desert at once and hasten back to your Father's embrace.'

Our Last Hour. Isaiah xxvi. 3.

In a lecture on 'The Trinity: a Practical Truth,' Joseph Cook speaks thus of the late Charles Kingsley:—'In 1875, Charles Kingsley, having bidden adieu to Westminster Abbey and Windsor Castle, lay dying; and, with the breath of eternity on his cheeks, the central thought of this modern man was that "only in faith and love to the Incarnate God our Saviour can the cleverest, as well as the simplest, find the peace of God which passeth all understanding." "In this faith," says his wife, "he had lived; and as he had lived, so he died—humble, confident, unbewildered." In the night he was heard murmuring: "No more fighting; no more fighting." Then followed intense, earnest prayers, which were his habit when alone. His warfare was accomplished; he had fought the good fight; and on one of his last nights on earth his daughter heard him exclaim: "How beautiful God is!" The last morning, at five o'clock, just after his eldest daughter and his physician, who had sat up all night, had left him, and he thought himself alone, he was heard, in a clear voice, repeating the words of the Burial Service: "Thou knowest, O Lord, the secret of our hearts; shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, O Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy, merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge Eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, from any pains of death, to fall from Thee." He turned on his side after this, and never spoke again.'

The Soul's Memory. Isaiah xxvi. 8.

Dr. Jessup, the Syrian missionary, says that when his father, long a Vice-President of the American Board of Missions, had been twice paralysed, his memory gone, and even his own house no longer recognised, he was at home when he got into his church, or remembered the Missionary Board, and wrote a letter to its representatives full of the spirit of missions. He could conduct family prayers as well as ever, and was perfectly sound in mind and memory as to the Redeemer's kingdom. It was like the disintegrated quartz falling away from the pure gold.

ILLUSTRATIONS

God's Searching. PERPORA, the great Italian music-master, kept one of his pupils learning the same lesson for three years. The pupil began to murmur, but the master was firm. Four, five, six years passed, and yet he was still at the same, until at last, when he began to fear he might, after all, be just at the beginning, the great teacher set him free with the words, 'Go, my son, for thou hast nothing more to learn,' and he found himself the first singer of Italy. So God keeps teaching us the same lesson over and over again—our utter nothingness, our complete helplessness, and our perfect sinfulness.

ISAIAH xxviii. 10.

The Patience of Advent. THE lesson of Advent is a twofold one. It is a lesson of *watchfulness*. It is also a lesson of *patience*. They are the two contrasted tones heard all through that solemn discourse upon the Mount of Olives from which, as 'in a glass darkly,' through parable and figure, we have learned all that we can ever learn of that

S. JAMES v. 7, 8.

'far-off divine Event,
To which the whole creation moves.'

Watch! and yet again: Take heed! '*Watch*, lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping.' And yet again—'Take heed that no man deceive you! If any man say, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not.' 'It is very near, even at the doors.' And yet again—'Of that day and that hour knoweth no man.' 'The end is not yet.' 'In your patience possess ye your souls.' We hear both tones in the references to the Second Advent in the Epistles; but there it is the *second* which is predominant. It is the great ground, urged again and again, for quietness and confidence, for judging gently, for patient endurance, for waiting God's time, for not sorrowing as men without hope. The *Master is coming back*. It is His world, not ours. He is absent for a little while—absent to our eyes. Yet He is Master; we work for Him. He not only sets the tasks, but prescribes the conditions, knows the conditions, sees the issue of everything, has all the threads in His hands. He took all the burden on Himself, counted the cost, and, having counted it, 'despised the shame' and agony of the Cross, 'for the joy set before Him'—the joy of the perfect coming issue. He orders things on the largest scale, and He orders them on the smallest. There is no small or great to Him. A thousand years are as one day. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. He will return. His triumph—the triumph of justice and goodness—is only delayed a little, only hidden from our purblind eyes. It is visible all the time to Him.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISTLE	PHIL. IV. 4-7.
GOSPEL	ST. JOHN I. 19-23.
FIRST MORNING LESSON	ISA. XXX. 1-27.
FIRST EVENING LESSON	ISA. XXXII. OR ISA. XXXIII. 23-26.
SECOND LESSONS . . .	ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMON

'The Tabernacle of God is with Men.'

Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men. REVELATION XXI. 3.

'THE Feast of Tabernacles' stands in a different position to the other two chief 'Feasts' of the Jews. 'The Passover' has had its one distinct fulfilment in the death of Jesus Christ, coincident with the exact period of the year. 'The Pentecost' has been definitely fulfilled in a single event by the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the giving of the Gospel law, at the very time of its celebration. But 'Tabernacles' has had no one definite historical antitype, unless it be the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, when He was pleased to put on 'the tabernacle' of our human body.

It is possible therefore—as many writers have said—that it will have yet a more express and accurate counterpart when the Jews shall have returned to their own land, and the temple-worship will be restored. Zechariah has a remarkable prophecy upon the subject. He says: 'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the

family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain, there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.'

Certainly this prediction has not yet been accomplished. It may, therefore, be still a thing of the future. And the context of the passage which I have taken for my text lends itself to the same conclusion.

But however this may be, at present 'the Feast of Tabernacles' is represented only by the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And whatever brighter signification there may be of these words,—when the body of Jesus shall be seen amongst us in all its royalty and its beauty,—the reflection of it lies now upon the event which we are going to commemorate this week: and therefore the wonder—the wonder of wonders—is present, while I speak:—'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.'

A 'tent' or 'tabernacle' (more familiar in earlier days and in eastern climes) easily moved—set up to-day that we may strike it to-morrow—is the well-known emblem of our bodily frame.

The ante-resurrection body is the 'tent' of human fabric; the post-resurrection body is the 'house' of Divine architecture. 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.'

And even that little body—which was set up in the manger—had, tent-like, its infirmities and its pains. He 'groaned' in His 'tabernacle,' being 'burdened.' It was taken down very roughly before it went to the grave. It was reared again a spiritual body. Then it was removed and altered again, when it was taken up to be a glorified body. And it will be transported once more to our world visible, with what changes I know not, when it will be said, indeed, with a higher meaning than ever before, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.'

Taking it, then, as an illustration of Jesus in His humanity among men, we have to consider what is conveyed by the metaphor. And the right rule of interpretation here, as always, is, what would the image be to a Jew? for we come into all the promises through the Jews.

Now, to a Jew's mind, the expression, 'the tabernacle,' would lead them immediately to travel back to their own 'tabernacle' in the wilderness. And that the more because of the definite article '*the* tabernacle:' 'the tabernacle of God is with men.' Thither, therefore, we must follow him now. And we must take our idea of 'the Man Christ Jesus' from 'the tabernacle' which Moses set up in the wilderness.

The 'tabernacle' in the desert—and until the building of Solomon's temple which took its place—was, in the first instance, the token and pledge of God's constant presence with His people.

Now this is exactly what Christ in His manhood is to us—*a presence.* He died that He might live; and He lived that He might live for ever in His Church. God was present before Christ in His Church; but here is the difference of the gauge, God in Christ is present now in all the sympathies of man.

The question is often raised, and is a reasonable one, Is the Holy Spirit in us the promised presence of Christ? or, is there a presence of Christ besides, distinct from the Holy Ghost?

I should say that there is a presence of Christ distinct from the Holy Ghost; and that one great office and intention of the Holy Ghost is to make known and to make sensible to us the actual presence of the Second Person in the Trinity, as *Man,* in the fellowships of a Man.

So that it is literally and personally true—as Christ said so emphatically—'*I* will come to you;' '*I* am with you alway.' 'The tabernacle of God'—God in His tabernacle, in the tabernacle of His body—'is with men.'

But in 'the tabernacle' of the Jews there was a special token of presence in the Shechinah which shone always over the ark on the mercy-seat, between the cherubim, which special presence we also have in Christ. A light—a light within—so that the illumination and the joy which a Christian sometimes feels—and might always feel if he kept near enough, for it is always there—is not only, or so much, the Spirit, as the positive presence and indwelling of Christ, which, at that time, is made manifest and vivid to him by the Holy Ghost.

And this is a pleasant thought, and an assuring one, when I feel very happy, it is Christ with the Holy Ghost—a double Comforter! a two-fold light! a joy within a joy! a glory within a glory! the Christ on the mercy-seat in covenant, shining upon my heart, made real to me by the Holy Ghost.

Being a token of presence, 'the tabernacle' became also *a witness.* This was its nature, 'the tabernacle of witness.'

Standing in the middle of the camp, it was always a witness: witnessing to God's faithfulness, God's love, God's care. The same as the name of Jesus Christ: 'I have given Him for a witness to the people.'

And it is a very important view which we should take of the Incarnation. For oh, what a witness is here! That body—so weak, so sensitive, so outraged, so degraded, so agonised, so slain—clothing the Son of God! becoming actually a part of the Son of God!

What must that Father be, who gave Him, who was pleased to bruise Him? What love! What must that sin be—which could be forgiven by no less a thing? What justice! What must that heaven be, which would compensate for it all? What glory! What must be the dignity, what must be the destiny of this body? What must be the brotherhood of the Lord Jesus?

O how many, and how sure, and how eloquent a witness lies in that one great simple fact—'The tabernacle of God is with men!'

But it is more. The 'tabernacle' was not only the token of presence, and the witness, but 'the tabernacle' was one great appointed place and means for all *intercourse with God*. There they consulted God; there God spake, and gave His answers.

That is exactly what Jesus is to a man. By Him, and by Him only, have we communion with God. He is 'the Word'—the Word both ways: the Word by which God speaks to us, and the Word by which we speak to God.

He is God brought near. By Him—made through Him yourself a priest—you go within the veil; and there you tell, in all the definiteness that you can desire, all you have in your heart to say and ask; and you get your answer clear and plain, as when the Lord shone by the Urim and the Thummim upon Aaron's breastplate. No other intervention is needed. 'The tabernacle of God is with men.'

Every man may take all his sins, and all his sorrows, and all his difficulties straight to Christ; and be sure that He shall, at once, have all he wants—pardon, absolution, assurance, comfort, strength, guidance,—back straight from Christ.

Take care, if you love your soul—if you value peace, take care that you use your privilege well. Jesus is at your side—a Brother, a God in Brotherhood! Tell Him everything. Go to no one else. Confess to Him. Consult Him. Ask Him. Thank him. Listen to Him. It is real. It is your own dear Saviour,—in your own nature; like you; made for you: brought near to you in His manhood, for this very end. 'The tabernacle of God is with men.'

And there is another thought in the words. The 'tabernacle' was for *sacrifice*. No sacrifice could be offered in any other place. If it was not offered there, it was an abomination! The leading idea of 'the tabernacle' was sacrifice. The two words are almost identical. There was the only altar for sacrifice, and we know no other.

Be careful that you never misuse the word 'altar.' Jesus alone—Jesus Himself is altar—altar, priest, and sacrifice. By His one act, Himself on Himself, offered Himself, the one only propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

And not burnt-offering only—He is the altar of incense. And it is only as it touches Him that any offering we can ever make—of thanks, or praise, or money, or service, or our own bodies, or our own souls—can ever rise acceptable to God.

Thank God, 'the tabernacle'—with its altar, and its sacrifice, and its priest, and its incense,—'is *with men*,' always at hand. We can go and get propitiation, and forgiveness, in a moment; and whatever we may wish to present to God, there is that sweet incense which can make the poorest, meanest thing that we ever give, to mingle with the incense of the saints, redolent to the Father.

Be sure that you go to your altar often enough. Every morning and every evening, and often during the day—go to your altar. For therefore it has been brought so near to you that, wherever you are, you can touch your altar. It is 'with men,' that it might be 'for men.' 'The tabernacle of God is with men.'

There were degrees of sanctity and beauty in the ancient 'tabernacle,' and there are degrees *of* Jesus—to His people; or, more strictly speaking, *to* Jesus.

Some of you are only in the porch; some have reached the holy place; some (six of this congregation this last week),—some are gone home to the holy of holies.

But it is all *one* '*tabernacle*' and *one Jesus*—even back to the porch. So we are all *one*. And the highest saint in heaven—as he sings his alleluia—has as much cause as the weakest babe in Christ, lisping his first confession, to say—'The tabernacle of God is with men.'

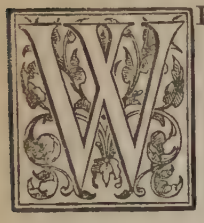
Remember—we owe it all to the humanity of Jesus. Jesus might have been all this, and would have been all this if He had never come to this earth; but His perfections would have been unknown to us, and His work, if done, far, far away out of our sight. All—all that is life—that is life in either world—all owes itself to that one grand truth: 'The tabernacle of God is with men.'

J. VAUGHAN,
The Brighton Pulpit. No. 924.

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE.

Religion Free from all Gloom and Melancholy.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice. PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.



E are not for a moment to imagine, that this repeated injunction of the Apostle was given to his converts because there is any natural indisposition in the heart of man to joy. The very contrary is the fact: and it is among the proofs of the truly tender Providence under which we live, or rather of the filial relation in which, by adoption, God has condescended to place us, that gladness is the spontaneous growth of the human breast. There is, no doubt, a sufficient tendency in our nature to rejoice; but, unfortunately, it is too generally contented with a spurious and mistaken joy. We have all the ready faculty and appetite for this gratification; but they are applied too frequently to objects which, in the end, produce only care and bitterness of heart, instead of joy. The Apostle, however, has, in this short direction, thus doubly enforced, pointed to the only source of all real and lasting joy, when he desires the Philippians to 'rejoice in the Lord.' The 'joy of their Lord,' an exultation in Christ, arising from a mixed feeling of love and support, of confidence and delight, in the fulness of God's mercy, power, and protection, was ever to be the inmate of their hearts, the index of their faith, the characteristic of their lives.

Among the moral evidences of the fall of man, to be plainly traced in our common nature, is a distrust of religion; a suspicion in the undisciplined heart that Christianity has not all the blessings to bestow which it so loudly professes. By the worldly mind it is contemplated as something at once specious and treacherous.

In fact one of the principal causes why men do not accept the terms of the Gospel, and live up to its precepts, is this very presumption that religion is altogether joyless in its effects. And this opinion, rashly taken up, and perhaps fatally acted upon, has, with such persons, received no small confirmation from the dismal piety of so many well-meaning perhaps, but evidently mistaken professors of our most consolatory and exhilarating faith. The truth is, men regard the Deity through the medium of their own peculiar views, their own feelings, and even their own temperaments: and the God of the calm, well-regulated, and highly-informed mind cannot, it must be evident, although the knowledge of Him be apparently drawn from the same source, bear the same character of Deity with

the God of the man of uncorrected feelings, morose disposition, and confined information. If we look into the history of all religions, we shall be forcibly struck with this fact,—that in proportion as we recede from Christianity rightly felt, thoroughly understood, and properly applied to the present state and condition of mankind, the more do we perceive the merciful Ruler and Judge of all the world, converted by His worshippers from a God of joy into a God of vengeance, to whom sorrow and suffering are more acceptable than a life of cheerful and happy obedience.

I shall endeavour to show that joy is the necessary result and leading characteristic of Christianity, rightly understood and honestly practised.

I. In the first place, then, it is the object of religion to purify, calm, and exalt the heart and affections, and to create within a 'peace that passeth all understanding.' As long as the desires are allowed to wander in search of happiness from earthly and inferior objects, the man is restless and unhappy till they are attained, and soon cloyed and dissatisfied in the possession. We need appeal only to every man's experience for the proof of this assertion. Every man will perceive, upon reflection, that whenever the passions are excited, all is tumult and feverish disquietude within. A void, an urgent want, is felt, which forbids anything like composure of mind and feelings till it be supplied: and when we have gained it, there is a principle within which asserts the dignity of the soul by making us feel and know that after all it is unworthy of our affections. Now, Christianity produces an effect directly opposite to this. Having brought the affections and desires into subjection to the will and commands of God, it supplies them with objects of the most exalted nature, for the pursuit of which they were originally implanted in us, and in the enjoyment of which, even here, there is no satiety, no disappointment. The soul is conversant with pleasures, arising from close and constant intercourse with its Maker; from a conscience at peace with itself; from a sense of endeavouring to fulfil the great end of existence; from the anticipation of endless bliss; and the consequence is an internal delight, as peculiar and full in its kind, as it is durable in its nature.

II. In the next place, religion is productive of joy, by being the sure remedy for all that pride, and vanity, pretension, and self-sufficiency, which interfere so fatally with regular and uniform cheerfulness. Where the mind is inordinately puffed up with conceit, with some fancied merits and superiority of its own, when it is always craving the homage of others to any imagined pre-eminence, and cherishes an overweening opinion of talents, and faculties, and virtues, which, from some cause or other, the world will after all

persist in overlooking or disparaging, it is impossible that the man can experience joy. Now with religion such feelings are inconsistent; and, therefore, the Christian's joy is not liable to such interruption, such total extinction. The Christian's joy is independent of the fickle applause and observance of his fellow-creatures, which are so often the anxious desire of minds not yet renewed by religion, which are considered indispensable till they are obtained; and, when acquired, confer no real joy.

III. But Christianity creates in the soul a delightful composure also, by giving us correct views of life and its trials, and by supplying it with fortitude, and resignation, and equanimity, under the troubles which are the destined portion of man in this world. The Christian alone is truly sensible that he is here in a state of discipline and moral training for a higher and never-ending existence. He perceives in himself prevailing tempers, habits, qualities, and sentiments, which are the consequences of a degraded nature, and which would necessarily unfit him even for a *spiritual* state of being, much more for the society of saints and angels, in the presence of his God and Saviour. These, it is the business of his present life to regulate and correct; and by bringing his temper, thoughts, actions, and desires into conformity with the will of God mercifully revealed to him, to go on to such a degree of purity and perfection of his nature, as may thoroughly prepare him for a glorious transition into the world of spirits. He does not, therefore, expect too much of this life, and of the world, in the way of happiness. With his affections so raised, he does not expect more enjoyment from the things around him, than they were intended to bestow on him. Hence, with a consciousness that 'all things are working together for his good,' 'the anchor of his soul' is fixed; and the little passing storms, which so agitate or founder the many vessels voluntarily exposed to them, neither affect his steadfastness nor security.

IV. Again; religion supplies us with a sure mode of pleasing God in spite of our many sins, infirmities, and imperfections; and thus inspires delight, where we might otherwise feel despondence.

V. Religion cancels, too, all the *effects* of sin. It puts an end to fear, and shame, and self-reproach, and spiritual bondage.

VI. The Christian, likewise, knows best how to derive a real pleasure from the blessings here within his reach.

VII. But all the duties of a religious life entail a joy upon their performance. It is not merely in communion with God, in private, family, or public worship; it is not only in the quiet moments of holy contemplation and devotional aspirations after its supreme good, and even from the solemn work of repentance, that the soul experiences a peculiar delight; but it extends, in a certain degree, to

everything done under a Christian sense of duty. There is 'a joy in which a stranger does not intermeddle,' and of the highest kind, resulting from all that we do upon proper motives.

VIII. But we have only to look generally upon the glorious truths of Revelation for endless sources of rejoicing. By this we know that God himself is the great merciful Ruler of the world, and all that it contains. We know that 'with Him is no shadow of turning;' but that, however the minds and conduct of His creatures may fluctuate, He 'is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' 'All things,' therefore, we may exclaim with the Apostle, 'are ours: whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' A. B. EVANS,

Sermons on the Christian Life and Character, p. 170.

The Spirit Bearing Witness.

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

I. CHRISTMAS is the season of rejoicing. The Church therefore on this Sunday takes up this her solemn note from S. Paul's affectionate Epistle to his beloved Philippians: 'Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.' The Christian's joy is not of the world, but spiritual and heavenly; and the whole passage proceeds to furnish us with a short and beautiful description of the nature of this joy: 'Rejoice,' not in the things of the world which come to naught, but rejoice *in the Lord.* And again, this joy differs from any other in its steadfast and enduring nature: 'Rejoice in the Lord *alway.*' This too is a lesson very seasonable; for Christmas is a time for all to rejoice, under all circumstances of life; but it finds many under outward afflictions of various kinds which might seem to render it no season of rejoicing for them: loss of friends or relations, or sickness, or poverty and worldly reverses, or depression of mind and sorrow for sin, or public calamities and the distresses of the Church. But the darker the night, the more brightly shines the star of Bethlehem.

To this is added, 'Let your moderation be known unto all men.' The rejoicing in spirit, the joy in the Holy Ghost, is in the secret heart—a joy which the stranger 'intermeddleth not with;' but that without, which is known unto all men, is this moderation; this is the outer garment seen of men. The Christian will not be earnestly bent on any earthly design or object, but in his dealings with mankind he will be under a sense of the little value of anything in this world; and therefore will show a quiet moderation and evenness of spirit; in possessing as one who possesses not; in suffering as one who suffers not; in doing all things as if he were doing nothing; and all

this from having his confidence in God only. If he meets with losses he is not troubled: if visited with prosperity he is not puffed up; if he meets with ill-treatment he is not angry; if despised he is not cast down. And S. Paul here adds the grounds of this 'moderation,' viz., his feeling that the time is short: 'The Lord is at hand.' This awakening Advent sound ever and anon occurs throughout the New Testament, as if it were intended to form the one ever-abiding impression on the mind of a Christian. The Christian's 'moderation' of mind, which is 'known to all' from his indifference to the things of the world, is connected with a deep sense ever in his mind that 'the Lord is at hand.' How it is that the coming of his Lord is so near he knows not, but he receives it in faith, in a full assurance that as Christ has taken such pains to impress upon Christians the suddenness and stillness, the speediness of His coming, that somehow hereafter, when all is accomplished, it will be found to have been so.

The Epistle adds in fuller explanation, 'Be careful for nothing.' There is no subject therefore whatever of any kind on which we are to be anxious; and indeed such anxiety is sinful, for it implies a want of faith. What then are we to do in the many troubles which beset our path each day of our lives? In addition to those greater afflictions and misfortunes which from time to time seem to bring a cloud over our existence, and sometimes of long continuance, there are also lesser cares daily occurring to all, and which with some eat out the very heart, and leave no power or inclination for anything better. The occurrence of these troubles cannot be helped; in what therefore is the remedy? S. Paul here tells us, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' What we need is, to be continually and at all times urged to prayer; and this is the object and use of all the lesser inconveniences and thorns of life.

And here we may observe in this instance of S. Paul, that his prayer with regard to that thorn which troubled him became soon mingled with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for past blessings is the best pledge and plea we can offer for future hopes. Thanksgiving opens and disposes the heart to God; and by acknowleding Him as the Author of all the good we have received, induces us to look to Him the more in prayer. And thus it is that in the Psalms prayers and thanksgivings are so blended together: the most earnest prayer is often lost in the end in thanksgiving. This of itself shows the effect of prayer, how it disposes us to lose ourselves in the sense of God's goodness.

II. On last Sunday the collect spoke of the Messenger sent before to prepare the way of Christ; and in consequence the Gospel for that day was of Christ bearing testimony to S. John the Baptist, His Messenger; but this Gospel for to-day is of the Baptist bearing

testimony to Christ Himself; and with very peculiar fitness for this Sunday, for he was bearing witness to Christ and to His Godhead, just before He Himself appeared, even as it is with us on this day just before we acknowledge His appearing on Christmas Day. While He was among them, but unknown, not yet manifested; even so is it now: He is among us, but unseen; we wait for His Great Advent.

But there are many points which render this, the appointed Gospel, peculiarly suited to this season, and especially to this day. It is taken from the opening of S. John's Gospel, in which he is setting forth the Godhead of Christ; and in so doing he adduces this testimony of the Baptist. Because it was to John the Baptist our Lord Himself appealed as the great proof of His authority. 'Ye sent unto John,' He said, 'and he bare witness unto the truth.'[1] And when the Jews questioned His mission from God, and His authority, He put this before them, 'John the Baptist and his baptism, whence was it? from Heaven, or of men?'[2] It was not, He said, that He needed 'testimony of men,' for His works proved Him to be of God; but it was because this was the divine appointment, that John the Baptist should be sent before Him as the messenger and the witness; and therefore it is that the Evangelist, in declaring the Divinity of Christ, thus introduces S. John the Baptist: 'This is the record,' he says, 'of John, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art Thou?' It was so ordained of God that the testimony should thus be brought before the sacred nation, that they might be without excuse. 'Priests and Levites' in a formal deputation 'from Jerusalem.' It was the Law itself putting the question, 'Who art Thou?' Art thou *the Christ* whom we expect? But if not, *art Thou* then *Elijah*, whom the last Prophet Malachi said should come before Him? or if not, *art Thou that Prophet* whom God said to Moses He would raise up from among their brethren, so that being God, yet He should speak to them as man? John the Baptist said in answer, that he was spoken of by Isaiah, the great Prophet of Christ's kingdom, *as the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, preparing the way. He came not to work miracles, as Christ did, and as the other Prophets, but was only a voice. He was even as *the voice* of His Church unto the end of the world *crying in the wilderness*, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and *make* His *paths straight*.' Here, therefore, in the Gospel for to-day we have *the Prophet Isaiah*—the great Prophet of Christ's coming—we have the voice of the messenger John the Baptist, and we have S. John the Evangelist bringing forward these two as his witnesses; what could be more suitable to announce Christmas Day?

I. WILLIAMS,
The Epistles and Gospels, vol. i. p. 31.

[1] S. John v. 33.

[2] S. Matt. xxi. 25.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

Rejoicing in the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

THE Apostle had already written, 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord;' but, as if this was not enough, he must repeat the precept, 'Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice'; and thus this epistle of his has had a particular attraction for Christians who have felt the pressure, whether of duty or of sorrow; and among those I may mention one who certainly was a great student of Holy Scripture in its practical aspects—the late Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Hamilton. He used to say that when he felt depressed or discouraged he found it best to read the Epistle to the Philippians through as soon as he could make time to do it, for in this letter of the great Apostle, more than anywhere else in the sacred volume, he found the sustaining force and motives which helped him on his way. And it is not hard to see why this passage from the Epistle has its place in the services of this the last Sunday in Advent, for we are now very near the great festival of the birth of Christ. We are pausing, as pilgrims have described themselves as pausing, on the hills around Jerusalem, to prepare for their entrance into the holy city; we are waiting for the sunrise, and already the horizon is brightening with the splendour that precedes the sun. Christmas, though not the greatest of the Christian festivals, is yet scarcely inferior to Easter, while the custom of Western Christendom, and of our own country in particular, has made it more joyous. Not merely is the season dear to every Christian heart that feels something of the loving-kindness of God as shown by sending His Divine Son into our human world, but all lawful human joys, all family relationships, all that brings light and sweetness into our natural life, finds shelter, sanction, consecration, in the stable at Bethlehem. Joy, in short, is the key-note of the festival of Christmas, and therefore in immediate preparation for it, the last Sunday in Advent heralds this joy, but at the same time insists on its true source and motive; it undertakes to regulate as well as to stimulate it;—'Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice.'

I. Now this joy is first of all *intellectual.* The human reason has its profound satisfactions, its ecstasies, its moments of abounding, inexpressible delight. 'Why do you sit up so late at night?' was a question once put to an eminent mathematician. 'To enjoy myself,' was the reply. 'How?' was the rejoinder, 'I thought you did nothing but spend the night in working out mathematical problems.' 'So I do,' was the reply, 'in the working out of these problems con-

sist the enjoyment. Depend upon it,' he added, 'those persons lose a form of enjoyment, too keen and sweet to be at all described, who do not know what it is to recognise at last, after long effort and various failures, the true relation which exist between two mathematical formulæ.' Well, that is probably a form of enjoyment to which you and I are strangers, and yet we may well know enough of other subjects to believe in its reality, for in different degrees all real knowledge is delightful to the human mind, for the same reason which makes pure mathematics so peculiarly delightful; all real knowledge involves contact with fact, with truth. Why is this contact so welcome to the mind of man? Because the mind is made for God, the truth of all truths, the one ultimate and supreme fact, the absolute Being, who is the meeting-point of all that really is, in whom, as manifested in His Word, or Son, are 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

In revelation the being, the perfections, the life of God are spread out before us like a boundless ocean, that we may rejoice in Him alway as the only, the perfect satisfaction of our intellectual nature.

II. This joy in the Lord is, secondly and pre-eminently, *moral*. It is the active, satisfied experience by a created moral nature, a coming in contact with the uncreated and perfect moral being. For God, we know, is not merely a self-existent being; He is not merely resistless force or boundless intelligence; He is, as I have already said, sanctity, justice, goodness, mercy, and as such He appeals to another side of man's nature than his reason. He is, as the Psalmist said, 'the joy of the heart;' and, indeed, what we mean by 'joy' in common language has much more to do with our affections than with any operation of our reason. It is in the play of the affections upon an object which responds to them and satisfies them that most men would feel joy. Thus many things here below. To the man of family, his wife, his children, call out and sustain this abounding sense of delight which the ordinary occupations of his understanding never or rarely stimulate. Little as he may think it, on that threshold, beside that cradle, the man stands face to face with the attributes of the everlasting Being who has thus infused His tenderness and His love into the works of His hands. Joy, as it is one of the first experiences, so in its more magnificent forms it is the crowning gift of the new life in the soul of man. 'Not only,' says the Apostle, summing up the description, 'not only being reconciled shall we be saved by Christ's life, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' The old fear which skulks away behind the trees of the garden from the justice of the All-seeing and the All-powerful is gone. Clinging to the Cross of Jesus we look into the face of the everlasting Father;

with joy we 'draw water out of the wells of salvation'—out of the wounds of the Crucified, out of the sacraments of the Church, and we cry, 'Thou shalt make me in the coming world full of joy with Thy countenance.'

Let us note one or two practical points in conclusion. Our power of rejoicing in the Lord is a fair test of our moral and spiritual condition. S. Peter describes Christians as men who, though they see not the Lord Jesus Christ, yet 'believing in Him, rejoice with joy unspeakable.' How, indeed, if He is a real being to us, can it possibly be otherwise? How can we reflect on those eternal years, on that Holy Incarnation, on that spotless character, on that cross of pain, on that open grave, on that intercession which ceases not even now, and recollect that all these are ours, and yet not rejoice in Him whom thus in the mysteries of His life we possess? The heart which, in Isaiah's language, does not 'break forth into joy' at the mention of His name, at the sound of His words, at the sense of His near presence, is surely, for spiritual purposes, paralysed or dead.

And, secondly, this power of rejoicing in the Lord is a Christian's main support under the trials of life. Sooner or later these trials must come to all of us, and whether they shall sweep the soul along with them down the torrent of despair depends on whether the soul has or has not learned to rejoice in an unchanging object, who does not depend on them.

And thus, lastly, this power of rejoicing in our Lord is one of the great motive forces of the Christian life; within the regenerate soul, it is in our Lord's words, a 'well of water springing up to the everlasting life.' It fertilises everything, thought, feeling, resolution, worship; it gives a new spring and impulse to what before was passive and well-nigh dead, it makes outward efforts and inward graces possible which else had been undreamt of. This gift will not be refused you if you ask for it; and you will experience, not an occasional convulsion, spasmodic, unseemly, boisterous, it may be irreverent, but a tranquil, yet strong emotion, which, like a river bearing the soul upon its surface, sparks brightly as the beams of the Sun of Righteousness fall upon it, and as slowly but surely it pursues its way towards the ocean of eternity; for there is the end, there at the last in His presence is 'the fulness of joy, and at His right hand are the pleasures for evermore.'

H. P. LIDDON,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. viii. p. 401.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Coming of our Lord a Motive for Christian Gentleness.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. PHILIPPIANS iv. 5.

I. THE word 'moderation' has different meanings. Sometimes it tells us that the persons spoken of are, as we say, moderate in eating and drinking, and in other refreshments of the body; that they are very careful not to indulge themselves too far. Sometimes, again, we hear it used in common talk, or read of it in books as being that, by which people are moderate in their likes and dislikes, neither blaming nor praising anything, neither hating nor loving anybody, too much. It is in this latter sense that the word 'moderation' is used here by S. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians. It is the same meaning as gentleness. As, when he speaks of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and says that we must be no brawlers, but gentle, and that the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable and gentle. We, as Christians, Christ's servants and members, should always be ready to judge kindly of others; always to speak kindly of them and others, and to put ourselves in their place, let them be never so provoking. This is the temper and tone of mind which the Apostle recommends in other places to the clergy, and here to all Christians generally.

II. But here a difficulty arises. How can it be right to let this our 'moderation,' our good and gentle way, be known unto all men, seeing our Lord Himself has so earnestly commanded us to hide from man what we do in the way of goodness as much as ever we can without interfering with other duties? 'Let thine alms be secret'—that is to be each person's wish and desire. He is really to wish and to pray in his heart that the good that he does for God's sake may be known to none but God. But let the Church's light 'shine before men,' that is, our Lord willeth all the doings of His people to be so done according to His will, that without any such thought or purpose of theirs, the Church may shine very brightly, and all nations beholding may listen and flow in unto it, and so, not any particular Christian, but the God of the whole Church, our Father who is in heaven, may be glorified.

III. The Lord is at hand. Christ is very near us, although He is as yet out of sight. That is one reason why we should be very moderate, very gentle, very considerate in our talk and in our judgment of each other. 'The cloud will soon be withdrawn, the gates of heaven will again be thrown open, and Christ, the Son of God, will come again according to His promise. He will come, by God's great longsuffering,

on this Christmas, as in former seasons of Christmas. As the preaching of S. John Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of our Lord, so these days of Advent, returning yearly, prepare the way for our keeping the morning of the first coming of Christmas Day. What right has any one of us to give way to angry feelings, to be scornful, spiteful, rude, uncourteous, haughty towards any one else, seeing that He whom all the angels worship did not think scorn to be born in a manger, and afterwards to die on a cross for that very person?'

J. KEBLE,

Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve, p. 391.

Subjects of Prayer.

Let your requests be made known unto God. PHILIPPIANS iv. 6.

I. FOR temporal blessings. (1) Our wealth; (2) our studies; (3) our undertakings.

II. For spiritual blessings. (1) For pardon; (2) for holiness in heart and life; (3) in usefulness and happiness.

III. In the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. (1) On ourselves; (2) Our own relatives and friends; (3) on the Church and on the world.

IV. For the spread of the Gospel. (1) In the multiplication of the necessary means; (2) for the removal of obstacles; (3) for the success of labourers; (4) for the conversion of sinners.

G. BROOKS,

Five Hundred Outlines, p. 216.

Christian Dependence on Prayer.

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. PHILIPPIANS iv. 6.

THE injunction thus addressed by the Apostle to his Philippian converts, is in substance the same as that which our Saviour Himself urged upon His disciples: '*Take no thought* for the morrow.'[1] The original word, which is translated in the one place '*take no thought*,' is in the other rendered '*be not careful*.' The original word in both passages is precisely the same, and ought in both equally, to be translated—'Be not over-anxious.'

I. The reasons for the injunction we can judge, at least partially, of ourselves. In the first place, such an over-anxiety is inconsistent with the soberness and moderation, which is in all things

[1] S. Matthew vi. 34.

recommended to the Christian pilgrim. Secondly, it chains down to the earth, to its miserable and grovelling pursuits, to its transitory joys and its unfounded sorrows, those thoughts and aspirations which might otherwise ascend to heaven; and thirdly, and worst of all, it argues an habitual distrust in God's mercy and goodness. Instead of doing our utmost, and then leaving the result to His will, this feeling leads us to imagine, that human means are in themselves efficacious, and that even the *result* is after all in our own power; as if by 'taking thought we *could* add one cubit to our stature.'

II. A confidence in God, such a confidence as shall exclude all independent trust in ourselves, and all fear as to the wisdom and goodness of His providential disposal of events, is absolutely necessary to the character of Christ's disciples, and it must be carried into every particular of our lives. And yet, while we submit our innocent wishes to the good pleasure of our Almighty Father, we are not called upon to stifle them altogether. Christian resignation is not perfect without the use of prayer, and yet prayer is relative to some actual wish. Resignation implies the existence of our own will, but as to its fulfilment makes it subordinate to His will, who is Lord of all. 'Not My will, but Thine be *done*.' It is not therefore a *sense* of our own wants, spiritual and temporal, which is forbidden, but a distrustful anxiety. The wants do and will exist; the wishes corresponding to those wants will arise in the heart: and the expression of those wishes is not only permitted, but expressly enjoined. The very earnestness of the prayer marks the intensity of the wish; and the intensity of the wish marks the resignation which surrenders it, by God's grace, more complete. Hence it is, that in the very same sentence, in which the Apostle forbids over-anxiety, he recommends resort to prayer and supplication, as the proper vent of our natural feelings. 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.'

III. Whenever we any of us either omit our prayers, or go through them as a matter of form, the secret reason, if we would search our own hearts, would be discovered to be a doubt in the efficacy of prayer. That doubt is one of the deadliest weapons of the devil, because it implies not only a general distrust in our Creator, but a disbelief also in His *covenanted* mercies, in His promise of hearing our prayers, in the efficacy of Christ's mediation, in the effectual operations of the Comforter on our hearts and minds.

The process, by which this doubt is suggested by our great enemy, seems to be as follows. The worshipper, in his anxiety to attain some object, prays for God's assistance, and at first confidently expects it. For some good reason it is denied. Displeased at this

disappointment, he imagines that, because God has refused to hear him once, he will refuse to hear him at all times. In his future petitions therefore he addresses Him, more as a matter of form and habit, than as expecting any real benefit to flow from his devotions.

It cannot be denied that in many cases our prayers are disregarded. All the reasons for this fact, it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend. It is a part of that stupendous plan, which can be known in all its bearings only to the Almighty, who framed it, and who is carrying it on. *Some* of these reasons, however, even with an imperfect knowledge, we can conceive. First, we know not whether our prayers, if granted, might not turn to our destruction. We see in some degree the present moment alone, imperfectly only in its relation to the past, and not at all in relation to the future. What may therefore appear *to us* good, may be in its nature evil; we may 'put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter;' and hereafter (if the reasons for the present order of things should ever be revealed to us) we may see cause to bless God for protecting us from our own prayers. Secondly, it may be, and doubtless is a part of our trial here, to meet with disappointments even in our prayers to God. If every prayer were immediately heard, we should be little disposed to that exertion, so necessary a part of the discipline which is preparing us for eternity; we should be walking, too, by sight rather than by faith; whereas, disposed as affairs are at present, we are taught practically to leave everything to God, and to exclaim with our Saviour even in the very agony of prayer, 'Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' Thirdly, the things which we ask for are in themselves seldom such objects as should engross the affections of the heirs of immortality.

But, whether our requests be heard or not, and whatever may be the reason for their rejection, the duty of prayer rests upon a foundation too solid to be shaken by all the cavils of the unbeliever, and all the doubts and perplexities which even a sincere Christian may sometimes experience. It rests upon the positive command of Christ, and both for its own sake and as a means of grace, it cannot be neglected without danger even for a single day.

By no other means, indeed, can we qualify ourselves for our peculiar condition here, and our peculiar prospects hereafter. Thus, and thus only, 'laying aside every weight,' and 'casting all our care upon Him'[1] who careth for us, we may boldly go forth into the world, and do our duties in our stations much more fully, much more cheerfully, than the man who trusts in the arm of flesh, and, when that fails him, abandons himself to despair.

R. W. JELF,

Sermons Doctrinal and Practical, p. 305.

[1] S. Peter v. 7.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Peace of God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS iv. 7.

THE unhappiness of man arises from the ill-regulated condition of his heart and mind; from the corruption of his will, and the perversion of his understanding, from wrongly-directed affections and ill-employed thoughts. External circumstances, even such as are powerless in themselves, derive their chief power over us from within. Viewed in their real nature, as means towards a higher end, they would all alike be welcome to us in our transitory condition; but, viewed as they are, as ultimate ends in themselves, they must, whether missed or attained, whether shunned or desired, end equally in 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' The life of the natural man is thus made up of perpetual craving and perpetual disappointment. He feels within him the capability of happiness in some undiscovered shape, an instinctive longing after something never yet attained, the relic and memorial of that paradise of God from which his race by transgression fell. And this instinct points at once to the ultimate destinies of his being. Happiness *somewhere* is doubtless the purpose for which we are brought into the world, and, as experience teaches us, that in a proper sense it is not *here*, reason and religion alike point to the possession of happiness *hereafter*. To the greater part of mankind, however, this truth is preached in vain; they look for a haven where God never intended them to find one, in some portion of that short period which, by the very condition of our nature since the fall, is subject to sickness, and calamity, and sin, and death.

I. On earth, however, if the voice of religion and experience is to be heard, there is no perfect happiness for man. We may be comparatively happy; we may be happy for a season; we may have joy, and satisfaction, and comfort, and peace. Yes; with the deepest gratitude let it be acknowledged, great and multiplied are the enjoyments which the Lord of all goodness hath prepared for His creatures, and still greater the blessings which even here are provided for us in the dispensations of grace. But surely this present blessedness, incalculable as it is, can be but the shadow of that happiness which will be proportioned to the expanding capacities of glorified beings; it is as different from it as earth is from heaven. The object of our existence is such happiness as is permanent, perfect, unalloyed, not disturbed by fear, nor saddened by recollections. But where is permanence or perfection to be found on earth? Happiness is for the spirits of just men made perfect, such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

But here in our imperfect state, living as we are under grace and not in glory, we have reasonable ground for making a distinction between *happiness* on the one hand, and *joy* and *peace* on the other. Happiness and glory are our treasures in heaven, but our richest treasure here, the highest blessing for the imperfect pilgrim through the troublesome paths of life, is (according to the Apostle's usual salutation to the Churches) Grace and Peace, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,' peace and joy and comfort in the Holy Ghost.

II. But if this 'peace of God' is the highest promise of the life that now is, it may be profitable to inquire further, in what it properly consists? What are its effects? In what manner, by what persons, and on what conditions it may be obtained?

(1) The sense of the word 'peace' under the Gospel dispensation, both in the prophets and in the New Testament, is equivalent to reconciliation to God by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, together with the consequences of that reconciliation upon the children of the promise.

(2) The consequences of this reconciliation are, to those who accept it aright, tranquillity of mind and conscience, a firm and certain hope in God's promises, amidst all the terrors and temptations which surround us, unity with ourselves and with Christ, in the consciousness of sins remitted, and of penalties done away, the gifts and graces and comforts of God's Holy Spirit under the covenanted promises of reconciliation and grace.

(3) This ineffable peace of God was purchased for us by Jesus Christ upon the Cross; and not only so, but *through* Him also, by His mediation and intercession, it is applied and rendered effectual to the comfort and light of those believers who pray for it as they ought.

(4) The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall *keep* your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word translated '*keep*' means literally to *garrison*, to *guard*, to *defend*; and if we substitute this meaning in the text, a clearer and stronger meaning will be apparent, a vivid and appropriate allusion to the warfare of Christ's soldier. 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall garrison, guard, and defend your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord.' By the assistance of the Captain of your salvation, the consciousness of Christ's reconciliation, the comfort and support of God through His Holy Spirit, shall take possession of all your faculties, intellectual as well as moral, and defend the whole fortress against the assaults of the evil one.

R. W. JELF,

Sermons Doctrinal and Practical, p. 318.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Prayer and Thanksgiving.

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
PHILIPPIANS iv. 6, 7.

I. FIRST, we have the soul in a repellent or a negative aspect,—that is to say, repelling care. I can conceive no more wondrous words addressed to the soul that has just entered heaven than if God were to speak to us in something like the tenor of our text. Nothing would make us feel more at home there; nothing would bring such a heavenly feeling into the soul as if He were to say, 'My child, feel now you have entered heaven that there is no more room for care. You have only here to ask, and receive, and give thanks for what you get.' We do not know what He will say to us in heaven, but He is really on earth as well as in heaven; and though, when we get there, we shall be informed what it is—for as yet eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived it—what a comfort it is that even while we are here on earth He hath said to us, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto Me.' Now care always kills happiness. Whenever care enters into a man's heart it expels happiness.

The Lord bids us repel all care. Not that He promises us that we shall be free from care, but that he says this care is not to weigh us down. He does not desire that we should carry care at all; we are weighted enough; but He bids us cast the care on Him; 'casting all your care on Him, for He careth for you.'

II. Then He proceeds to tell us that the soul thus in repelling care becomes active. 'In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.' There are, you see, several things mentioned. There is 'prayer and supplication.' They cannot be quite the same thing. Prayer *and* supplication—prayer, which asks for what we need; supplication, which importunes and entreats God for it; and thanksgiving, which offers our gratitude at the throne of grace for that which we have received. So that this active life spiritually brings the soul into living or active union and communion with its God; and God says that in this sense we may come to Him and make known all our requests.

And He does not place a limit here. It is remarkable that He says 'in *everything*.' We sometimes feel that perhaps there are things which we ought not to ask, that there are subjects which we ought not to include in our prayers; and we feel in a difficulty about

this. Who shall define, who shall settle for us, what we ought to ask, what we ought to leave unasked, what we ought to include in our prayers, and what we ought to exclude altogether? Now, He says here, 'in *everything*.'

III. And what is the promise? That the soul shall be receptive. Here is the blessing that is promised: 'And the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' Here is the peace offered and promised, not to the world, not to the nations, but to the soul. And peace is something deeper, I take it, than joy. He begins by bidding us rejoice, even as the Apostle did in days of darkness and persecution; they could 'rejoice in the Lord alway,' rejoice even in tribulation; but he ends by something deeper than joy—peace, something that is abiding, something that is lower down than joy. Joy may be the exhibition, the manifestation, perhaps, of that peace; joy, we are apt to think, is more or less exultant; it does not last; it does not abide with us. And so it is, this peace is a contrast to that which is passing away. And we must remember that while our joy is fleeting, and like the meteor that flashes, this peace is like the soft and abiding light. In astronomical maps there is no place for the meteor; the meteor flashes across the sky, and it is gone, but the stars are all in the maps—the fixed, steady stars. When the meteor has flashed and gone the stars abide; and the star of peace is put forth here like a jewel in our text. The peace of God—not the peace of nations, though we pray for it—not the peace of man, though there is peace between man and man, when there is peace with God, but that which purchases them all, the peace of God—His peace.

J. FLEMING,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xii. p. 145.

Careful for Nothing.

Be careful for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 6, 7.

THOSE four words, 'Be careful for nothing,' are soon uttered; but they contain a mine of spiritual wealth. This we shall do well to explore. The world has its remedy for driving away what they call dull care. But Christ's remedy and the world's remedy differ as widely as do the poles.

We have here—

I. *A duty commanded.*

The duty commanded is—

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

(1) *To cast off care.*

'Be careful for nothing.' That is, be 'anxious' about nothing. The direction agrees with that other direction, 'Take no thought' no anxious thought) 'for the morrow.' This 'thought,' this 'anxiety,' or 'carefulness,' may arise from various circumstances. It may arise from some *good* you desire, which you fear you cannot attain. It may arise from some *evil* you dread, which you fear you cannot escape. Or it may arise from some *trouble* you feel, which you fear will never be removed.

If I were to attempt to count up the causes of your carefulness, they would be endless. It is a root of bitterness which springs up in every water, and is giving trouble to you all. Care came into the world with sin, and care will not go out of our world till sin goes out with it. Care is caused by your losses, your disappointments, your difficulties, your wants, your hardships, your privations, and your trials. These are the things which are ever producing in your minds agitating thoughts, and perplexing you in your course. And these are the things which the Holy Spirit here tells you ought not to make you careful. 'Be careful for nothing.' 'Easy advice to give!' some of you reply. 'How am I to get quit of my cares? Glad should I be to disperse these corroding anxieties. But how can I rid myself of them? I find the burden a heavy one indeed to carry; but who will take it from my shoulders, and bear it in my stead?'

Happily this question is easily answered. There is One whose strength is fully equal to the task, and who will carry all your burden for you. You that are believers are here told *to cast off your care from yourselves*, and—

(2) *To cast it upon your Lord.*

There is an infallible remedy for carefulness to you who are the tried servants of the Lord. The remedy is the 'throne of grace.' The Lord Jesus says to each of you that are His afflicted and harassed people, what the old Ephraimite said to the wayfaring Levite, 'Peace be with thee. Let all thy wants lie upon me. Only lodge not in the street. In everything let your requests be made unto me.'

But you must not overlook in this direction one short word, which is very encouraging. There must be 'prayer.' There must be 'supplication.' But, mixed with all your 'requests,' there must also be 'thanksgiving.' 'What!' you ask, 'thanksgiving,' when my heart is so full of sorrow, that it is nigh unto breaking? Yes, 'thanksgiving.' The voice of your thankfulness ought ever to rise higher than the voice of your complaint.

This is Christ's remedy for carefulness, 'Prayer with thanksgiving;' and that this remedy is worthy of your earnest attention will be seen from what the Apostle adds next as to—

II. *The blessing resulting.*

'And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'

The blessing resulting is 'peace,' 'the peace of God,' not the false peace of the wicked; but 'God's peace.' 'My peace,' says the Saviour, 'give I unto you.' And what is the character which is here given of this peace? It is something so marvellous that—

(1) *It is indescribable.*

'It passeth all understanding.' It is that which the unconverted heart hath not conceived. But God hath revealed it unto you that are His people by His Spirit. Your sins are all pardoned; your cares are removed; and you now have peace, the perfection of peace, 'perfect peace.'

(2) *It is all-controlling.*

It affords sure protection. 'It keeps,' as a garrison, the citadel of 'your hearts and minds.' Without this peace your hearts and minds would be like an unprotected village in an open country, in the time of war. Any smallest body of the enemies' troops would be able to lay waste your souls. But as long as this peace is your garrison, you need not fear all the confederate forces which may be brought against you.

C. CLAYTON,
Stanhope Sermons, p. 365.

The Peace of God, and what hinders it.

In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.'—PHILIPPIANS iv. 6, 7.

THE superlatives of the New Testament writers are bestowed mostly upon the practical realisations of religion. That which is merely speculative is eschewed. But little is said about the great mysteries of being—about God, life, the mystery of Christ, the life of the future. And what is said about these things always presents them on their practical side; it is said only for practical uses. The New Testament urges all things to practical tests and solutions. Is the intellectual mystery inscrutable?—then put it to the proof by experiments of practical life. Does the requirement seem impossible or inordinate?—test it by trying. 'He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine.' Most theological difficulties will yield to practical tests.

We are to attain to a 'peace of God which passeth all understanding.' The experience is to transcend every intellectual effort to understand it.

The Apostle, however, speaks of certain things which hinder the attainment of this ideal; and the practical thing for us is to understand these hindrances and remove them.

I. The evil that he would prohibit is care—over-anxiety about the things of life. Only the shallowest of eager infidelities could—with Strauss and Buckle and others—construe this as an injunction to disregard the ordinary obligations of human industry, prudence, and foresight. This is the doctrine of the monastery, or of the ascetic. The entire teaching and spirit of Christianity forbid such a construction. No duties are made more imperative than those of ordinary toil. 'If a man will not work neither shall he eat.' If he 'do not provide for his own, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' He is to 'work with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' Duties to our families, our neighbours, our country, are as imperative as duties to God. 'In diligence, not slothful.' Christ will justify no man who, under plea of attending to spiritual things, neglects common duties of life. A man may not neglect his business to preach in a pulpit, or to teach in a school. A woman may not neglect her husband and children to attend a prayer-meeting. If a man's affairs get into a state of embarrassment, or a woman's children go about with unmended clothes, or grow up ill-mannerly and uneducated, it is no excuse that it was for the sake even of saving men's souls. I am to do these common things 'heartily as unto the Lord;' in them 'I serve the Lord Christ.' My highest duty is the duty that lies next me. Great religious principles have their sphere in the least and lowliest duties. When most fervent in spirit I may be most diligent in business, so serving the Lord.

On the other hand, no man, under pretence of providing for his own, may so devote his time, and thought, and strength to business as that he neglects altogether the things of the soul. No business is rightly pursued that is not, first, itself made a service of the Lord; and, next, that is not so adjusted as to be compatible with spiritual culture and religious worship and work.

The care condemned is over-anxious solicitude about material things—a restless, wearing, fretting anxiety, that cannot do our best and then calmly leave issues in the hands of God's providence. 'I would have you without carefulness;' 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.' Even the little anxieties about His entertainment sufficed to disqualify Martha for her Master's instruction; and therefore to hinder the calm blessed peace of leisurely fellowship with Him.

II. There are things that we have no right to care about at all, things of sheer envy and covetousness. How our cares would be

lessened were they limited to things fairly belonging to us! How our burdens would be diminished were we to throw off all that are self-imposed! How much more alert our course were we to lay aside the weights with which we have clogged ourselves! How gratuitously Ahab multiplied his cares when he vexed his spirit about Naboth's vineyard; and Haman when he permitted his mortification about Mordecai to poison all his enjoyments; and the rich man when he troubled himself about barns for his accumulated goods! And how utterly inimical such cares were to growth in spiritual satisfaction—in the peace of God!

The difficulty is, to discriminate between cares that are lawful and cares that are not lawful. Perhaps the best test is Paul's test of prayer. Pray about it. That is a lawful care about which I can intelligently pray; which, with no sense of incongruity, I can cast upon Him 'who careth for me.' Ahab could not have prayed about Naboth's vineyard, nor Haman about Mordecai's homage, nor the rich fool about his barns. Nor can we about many of our speculations and enterprises. The true remedy for such cases of covetousness and worldliness is, not to ask God to gratify the passion, but to lessen it. The remedy for the care of covetousness is to cease to covet, for the miserable care of envy to cease to be envious, for an embarrassment of riches to disencumber ourselves of them, for inordinate toil and solicitude about business to diminish it. It is a mockery to seek relief from the care of bad passions by praying to God to gratify them. Why should a man think that he must reach such a standard of wealth, or enlarge his business to such a magnitude? There are moral considerations which put other limits to accumulation besides those of possibility.

III. How is this great hindrance to peace to be counteracted?

'The strong man armed' can be cast out only by a stronger than he; we cannot cast out the evil spirit and leave an empty heart—a 'house swept and garnished.' Natural human feeling must have something whereon to rest; you cannot say to a human heart, 'Be careful for nothing,' and propose no remedy for its care. It rests upon its misfortune or fear; the true remedy is to rest it on God. It need not so care because the Man of Sorrows is 'afflicted in all our afflictions.' He is our human brother, and is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmity;' while He is our almighty helper, with 'all things delivered into His hands.' Or if we think of the Heavenly Father, He is infinite in His tender compassions, and full of divine wisdom and power.

H. ALLON,
The Indwelling Christ, p. 170.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Believer's True Defence.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS iv. 7.

THE expressions here used by the Apostle, and which we render 'keep,' is much stronger in the original than in the translation. It is a military term, and denotes occupancy by aggression. This, perhaps, may sound somewhat strange. Had the Apostle spoken of the power of God, or of the Spirit of God, you might have expected some such result as he affirms, but you do not, it may be, see how the peace of God is to act as a kind of military force, strengthening the heart and mind, so that temptation is withstood. The difficulty is probably increased by the almost extreme terms by which this peace is defined—a peace which passeth understanding; for this peace, apparently making the cause unintelligible, leaves us but little power of perceiving its connection with the effect. Here, then, are important and profitable subjects for thought. In the first place, let us notice what that peace of God is, which is described as passing all understanding; and secondly, let us endeavour to determine what there is in this peace to keep the heart and mind, through Jesus Christ.

I. The peace of Christ—the peace which was enjoyed by Christ, and left by Him to His followers, was not a peace resulting from a sense of sin forgiven, for 'He had done no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.' It must have differed from the peace of reconciliation to God, inasmuch as there never had been enmity between the Father and the Son, but the Man Christ Jesus had always loved with a perfect love—obeyed with a perfect obedience, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Therefore we can only understand by 'the peace of Christ' the thorough harmony there was between His own will and the Divine—His perfect and cheerful acquiescence in every appointment of the Father—His undeviating confidence in His protection, and His imperturbable assurance of His love.

In some respects the peace attainable by ourselves must differ from that enjoyed by the Saviour, inasmuch as we have actually to pass from a state of enmity to a state of reconciliation. Still, since Christ bequeathed His own peace to the Church, the points of resemblance, we may believe, are more numerous than the points of distinction. Into the peace which Christians may look for, there will necessarily enter a sense of forgiveness—a consciousness that God, of His free and undeserved mercy, has blotted out their transgressions, and placed to their account the obedience of His Son, and of this element, as we have said, there could not have been aught in

the peace of the Redeemer. But assuredly there will enter into the Christian's peace, that harmony with the Divine will, tha acquiescence in the Divine dealings, that confidence in the Divine protection, and that assurance of the Divine love, which must have composed the peace of Christ; for these belong not to the Saviour, as He differed from ourselves, but rather as He was a man, living the life of faith in the midst of trials and temptations. And hence we may conclude that the peace which is spoken of in our text is the peace of God—a peace that is communicated or imparted by God—and which must also be the peace which Christ bequeathed to His Church; that besides the consciousness of the pardon of sin, it will involve a serene dependence on our heavenly Father, an unquestioning admission of the wisdom, and justice, and goodness of His every dealing, and a firm hope and expectation of everlasting happiness.

II. Let us examine the connection between this peace, and the keeping of the heart and mind attributed to it by S. Paul. To keep the mind of the Christian from the assaults made on the understanding by sceptical objections or insinuations—to keep the heart of the Christian from the assaults made on his affections by the world and worldly things—in both these cases the peace of God is adequate to the result.

He who has this peace has his will moving in harmony with the Divine—his affections subordinate to the holy law—his desires renewed—his fears of trouble and death subdued, and his hopes of immortality vigorous and abiding. The man in whom the peace of God rests has only to recur to this peace. He needs not the witness which the stars in their courses, or the accumulated occurrences of century upon century, bear to the inspiration of Scripture. He cannot doubt the origin of this peace. The world could not have given it, as the world cannot take it away. Ah! you might wonder as you saw the uninformed peasant resisting the attacks of the oldest champions of infidelity, manned by sceptical arguments and insinuations, though quite unable to show where lay the fallacy; but all wonder should cease when you knew that the man was a man in whom dwelt the peace of God; for the Apostle spake only what will approve itself to every candid inquirer, when he declared of this peace, that though it passeth all understanding, it will keep—it will garrison the mind, the understanding, of all in whom it is actually found.

And now as to keeping or garrisoning the heart or affections. The attack on the mind is that made by sceptical doubts or insinuations; the attack on the heart or affections is that made by the world and worldly things—those objects which address themselves to our natural desires, and solicit our senses or passions. And here it is that we

are exposed to the greatest danger. We may pass through life with but little of sceptical assault, but daily, yea, almost hourly, we are addressed through the affections, and are in peril of being overcome by the arms of the world. Here, therefore, it also is that we specially need a defence—such a garrison as will enable us to withstand those temptations to which we are most prone to yield. And we cannot but think that it is not from setting the standard of religion not sufficiently high that the best of Christians are so often overcome by the world and the devil. If they aimed at what they certainly might attain, seeing it is promised in Scripture—an abiding, elevating sense of God's love and favour, a filial delight in Him, and such an anticipation of heavenly joys as must make them already dwellers in God's presence, they would have comparatively no relish for base and transient pleasures, and would therefore be little moved by solicitations which now too often prevail. If the heart was tenderly and deeply set on religion, they might oppose, as it were, pleasure to pleasure, riches to riches, honour to honour—the pleasure, the riches, the honours, which God alone can bestow, to those which are proffered by the world; and thus would they be attached to the service of piety by the very same ties which now attach others to the service of sin, even the ties of inclination and preference.

The evil is that with the generality of Christians there is but little of felt delight in religion. They have no actual joy in believing—no such communion with God and with heaven as ministers to them a present and an exceeding gladness; and therefore, when tempted to indulge a low passion, or pursue vain shadows, they cannot find this peace of God within themselves; they cannot oppose joys more purifying to the proffered good, and bid the tempter depart. It ought not to be thus, and would not be thus, if greater heed were given to religion as a satisfying, pleasurable thing. You may remember that it was said by S. John, 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.' Not grievous! And, nevertheless, they are commandments which require the denial of our strongest natural inclinations, the mortification of the flesh, with its affections and lusts, and the performance of duties from which we instinctively shrink. How, then, can such commands fail to be grievous—how explain the coincidence which the Apostle makes out between our loving God and our keeping His commandments? If we keep the law because we love the lawgiver, the love cannot be abortive; obedience coincides with inclination, and therefore must be a pleasure. And in thorough coincidence with this, S. Paul, in our text, represents the heart or the affections as actually garrisoned by the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

Let a man acquire this peace and he is armed against a world, with all its vanities and pleasures. The world can offer no pleasure of which he has not a greater, nor menace him with any danger of which he has not a remedy.

H. MELVILL,
Penny Pulpit, No. 3753.

The Peace of God.

The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. PHILIPPIANS iv. 7.

'PEACE' is that state of mind and feeling which results from our knowing for certain that God is to us a reconciled Father, knowing for certain that our sins are forgiven; knowing for certain that the promises of the Word, and all the privileges and blessings of the Christian covenant are ours; knowing for certain that (after, perhaps, many wanderings) we have at last found the home of our spirits—in the knowledge and the love of God.

I. Now, there are hindrances to the perfect enjoyment of this 'peace'; and it may be well to consider some of them before we go any further. In the first place, then, our peace will be disturbed if we allow ourselves in any inconsistency of conduct. Our path of duty, then, is perfectly plain. We must be careful to cast out of our conduct things that are even doubtful; to abstain from all appearance of evil.

Closely connected with this subject of inconsistency is the other subject of the neglect of the means of grace. The Lord Jesus has appointed certain methods of maintaining the life which He has Himself imparted to us. We can hardly suppose that He is ignorant of our constitution, and has imposed upon us rules which we could afford to follow or not to follow—just as we please. He must know us better than we know ourselves. There is the Word of God—with which He would have us make ourselves ever better and better acquainted. 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.' There is the house of God, in which we are to engage in the work of united prayer and praise, 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.' Above all there is the Holy Table, the chief 'trysting-place,' at which the Lord Jesus Christ meets with the people who believe in His name, and imparts to them the rich spiritual treasure of His broken Body and poured-out Blood. 'This do in remembrance of Me.' A neglect of any of the means of grace, or a slipshod and intermittent use of them, will so disturb the spiritual life, that the enjoyment of the Divine peace will become an impossible thing.

Another hindrance may be found in the indulgence of anxiety, over-anxiety, solicitude, carking care. There is a beautiful little pool that you know something about—at least it is beautiful sometimes. The grass and the flowers wave on its borders, the trees sweep its waters with their branches, its surface is fair and calm and tranquil, and when the bright evening star rises in the cool light of the sky, it glasses itself in that fair pool as in a mirror, and you rejoice in the reflected beauty. Throw a stone into the depths of the pool, and immediately the image of the star is broken into a thousand fragments, and the loveliness, for the time at least, is gone. You can see nothing but dancing and quivering and glimmering lights. That pool is your heart. When it is calm it reflects the face of Christ, and you gaze on the reflection with delight. But let the cares of life drop into your soul, and the surface, so glassy before, is wrinkled and contorted now, and you lose the glorious face of Him who is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

Another hindrance may be found in indistinct or imperfect views of the Christian faith. Unless we see clearly that Christ has done everything to obtain for us acceptance with the Father, and that what we have to do is simply to avail ourselves of His work for us, and to take it and appropriate it and rest upon it, if we imagine, that is, that there is anything left for us to do in order to make our spiritual position secure, I must confess I cannot see how it is possible for us to enjoy peace.

II. I pass on to another remark, or rather, another question. What does this peace of God do for us? It 'keeps' the heart and the thoughts. The Apostle's word suggests a powerful garrison placed in a fortress, and protecting it from dangers within and without. There are foes attacking the fortress from the outside. What are they? Temptations of various kinds, influences of the age, the general unsettlement of opinion, and other things, the solicitations of sense, the various allurements of the world, the enemies who creep in through the eye, the enemies who creep in through the ear, the enemies who creep in through the brain. We are not secured against these by any amount of watchfulness (though watchfulness is always required), unless we have also within us the power of the 'peace of God.' Then—we are placed above them, and they assail us in vain.

G. CALTHROP,
In Christ, p. 303.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Peace of God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS iv. 7.

IT is significant, that the Epistle for this last Sunday in Advent is taken from that letter of S. Paul which, above all others, overflows with hopefulness and joy. We are not directed to-day to those graver thoughts which are inseparable from expectation of our Lord's return. The great watchword, the familiar greeting of apostolic days, 'The Lord is at hand,' sounds indeed in our ears, but not as a warning of judgment, not as a reminder of the account which we must give. It seems to have only joyful associations to-day; it seems to be toned by anticipation of Christmas gladness. It tells us of a presence in which all anxieties shall be done away, all cares lifted at last from hearts that are weary and heavy-laden here. 'The Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing.' Relief is on its way; the redressing of all wrongs, the solution of all enigmas, is nigh; these harassing troubles, these distressing doubts and days shall have an end. Meanwhile carry them all to the Throne of Grace.

I. What, let us ask, is the peace of God? S. Paul was certainly using no vague phrase when he spoke of such a peace. It stood for something which he knew well. He had made trial of its power to guard, and he knew also how true it is that it passes all understanding, that it lies deeper far than any act of the intellect can go in quest of it, that though it can be profoundly felt and enjoyed it cannot be analysed. Can we doubt that for him, no less than for those colleagues of his to whom the request was directly made, the peace of God was the peace of Christ, the peace which He solemnly made over and bequeathed to His chosen ones on the eve of His Passion? Here was the precious legacy which was to pass on in an unending river to all believers. The peace which God gives, S. Paul implies, is a peace which, coming as it does from Christ, the world cannot give. It excels every contrivance of man; all attempts to procure peace apart from Him are unsatisfying and vain.

II. Do we know what the peace of God is, in contrast with all devices evolved by man?

(1) Then, its superiority consists in *its universality*. It is a peace offered to all and obtainable by all. The peace of Stoicism was assuredly not for all. It was the perquisite of the philosophic few; it was for those rare spirits who could perceive and pursue a high ideal, who could conquer all weakness and rise to self-mastery. It was hopelessly out of the reach of the multitude; it was impossible to ordinary souls; it had no power to lift them above the temptations

of sense or to shield them from the arrows of fortune. And so, too, noble as it is in idea, Buddhism proves in practice the most inoperative of faiths. Enjoyable to the rich and the noble and to the ascetic and recluse who may make it the one business of their days, it has no power to raise the many out of their degradation. Its teaching seems but one long scornful wail over the vanity of this world and the misery of human existence, and it leaves men without a hope and without God to face the sorrow and struggles which, unless interpreted by the thought of His love, are a mystery too cruel, a burden too heavy for our poor hearts to bear.

(2) But, again, the peace of God surpasses all other, for this reason—that it has in it a Divine element, it springs out of the living spirit of *the love of duty*. It is that which Christ spoke of as His peace, the natural reflection of an entire surrender to the will of God. His peace was perfect because His obedience was unmarred, it was fed every moment by a trust which never faltered. The Gospel invites us to this peace, which comes of sure faith in a presiding love and of the sacrifice of our human wills to the holy will of the Father in heaven. It involves no false ignoring of the facts of our earthly lot, but all who have experienced it must have felt consolation and realised strength and a faith which never maketh ashamed. And it is a gift which we can only derive from the very heart and life of Christ Himself—God made manifest in the flesh. Only when we abide in Him, and He abides in us, is the soul established and settled upon a foundation which cannot be removed, but standeth fast for ever.

R. DUCKWORTH,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxvii. p. 20.

Against Carefulness.

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 7, 8.

THESE verses abound in contrasts. There is the contrast of care and prayer; the contrast of nothing and everything; the contrast of human understanding and the peace of God. It brings out the impressiveness of the Apostle's exhortation, and the full scope of it, if we keep these contrasts before our minds; but if we seek to be taught and encouraged by it, the best way is to begin at the beginning and follow it word by word. 'Be careful for nothing.' The exhortation is surprising, for if there is anything that experience makes certain, it is that care is inevitable. Yet our Lord gives

the same counsel in the very same words when He says, 'Take no thought for the morrow.' The Philippians had the same reasons for anxiety and carefulness that men have had in all generations, and have still. At the time when Paul writes they had even more than the common grounds of apprehension. They were exposed, for their religion's sake, to persecution, in which they might lose, at least, their goods and their liberty; and all that harasses men till this day—anxiety about the future, dread of want, doubtful health, the lack of prospects for those dependent on them—would have its home among them as well as among us. It is impossible not to think of such things: in a sense, they are responsibilities for which it is our duty to provide: yet the Apostle says roundly, 'Be careful for nothing.' In the Revised Version it is, 'In nothing be anxious,' and that helps to explain the energy of the advice. Prudence is every man's duty, and the imprudent will not be relieved by prayer of the consequences of his folly; but anxiety is the great foe of prudence. It is, in the working of the mind, what friction is in the working of a machine—a distinct diminution of its effectiveness. To be anxious and fretful about the future is to waste the resource we have in intelligence and prudence for meeting it; if we anticipate it with too painful earnestness, we shall be the less able to encounter it when it comes. Every one of us has anticipated and prepared for trouble that never came to pass. Every one of us has laid plans with anxious care to meet emergencies which did indeed arrive, but which had to be dealt with in a different way, that only the moment disclosed. Apart from faith in God altogether, there is much needless unhappiness due to anticipating the future. Sir George Cornwalle Lewis had a great deal to say for his opinion that prevention was not better than cure. If we were omniscient, and knew what to prevent, the common proverb might be true; but in our nervousness and anxiety we waste time, strength, and peace of mind in preventing ninety-nine things which were never going to happen, and as likely as not overlook the one that does happen, and has to be cured after all. But it is not this politic shrewdness, husbanding its resources and confident in its own presence of mind, that is the Apostle's cure for care. The contrast in his mind is that of man's prudence with its wearing anxieties, and faith in the good and quiet providence of God. The same contrast is disguised in the words of Peter, which our Bible renders 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.' Peter does not repeat 'care' as if the same painful thought were right in God which is wrong in us; he uses two different words, as if one should say, 'Casting all your anxiety upon God, for He has an interest in you which makes anxiety unnecessary.'

I. Let us now look at this alternative to care. In everything let

your requests be made known to God. There is to be a total abandonment of care, and unreserved confiding in God. We must not overlook 'in everything.' God has made us—He knows our nature; He knows the course of our life and all its circumstances; He knows what things burden us, fret us, fill us with apprehension and alarm. There is not any anxiety into which our Creator cannot enter, and therefore none is to be hidden from Him. When Elijah took on his heart the whole burden of an apostate nation, and by fretting and despondency made it even heavier than it really was, God looked on in sympathy, ready to relieve him the moment his soul looked upward. When Jesus saw Martha, careful and troubled about her dinner, losing patience and speaking sharply, like many an honest woman, because she had not four hands instead of two, He was vexed at the needless waste of thought. These are extreme cases that show the limits within which God has interest in us, and within which we may confide in Him. God's eye is on every man's business; He sees his difficulties, his probable losses, his anxieties, his struggles, his dread of certain contingencies over which he has no control, and in regard to these He says: 'Be not anxious, but confide in Me.' God's eye is on every family; He sees the children that are growing up; the delicate health of one, the difficulty of finding a career for another; He sees also, if it should so be, the symptoms of moral disorder, unruliness, wilfulness, folly, that grieve and alarm the hearts of fathers and mothers; and if love itself makes anxiety inevitable here, if deep concern be the very pledge and sign of a true heart, still it is to be sustained and purified by committing all to God. And so it is with the minor anxieties and distractions of life. God is great enough to care for the least things as well as for the greatest. The wonders that the microscope reveals are as much His work, and the objects of His universal providence, as those of the telescope; and we limit His goodness and faithfulness when we withdraw from Him even the least of our cares.

II. The Apostle notes one element which will never be absent from the Christian prayer, namely, thanksgiving. Remember that the occasion of prayer contemplated is that in which an anxious heart has driven the believer to confide in God. The spirit is clouded for the moment with doubt and care; it is sensible that the chances of life make demands on it to which it is unequal; it is almost inevitably depressed; yet, in this melancholy condition it is not to forget gratitude. 'In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' The Christian can always do this with a good conscience. At the bottom of his heart, beneath all the chance and change of outward circumstances, unaffected by anxiety and alarm, he has the deep and abiding con-

sciousness of redemption. He knows that in Christ Jesus God has loved him with a love that passes knowledge. He loved him before the foundation of the world. His love has sought and found him, and made itself sure and dear to him irrespective of outward conditions. The one thing that is beyond all doubt and question to the Christian, as the New Testament exhibits Him, is this redeeming love of God. This is the unchangeable blue sky behind all the clouds, black or grey. Paul never loses sight of it altogether, and it is this that gives the ring of triumph to all he says about trouble. 'He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him, freely give us all things?' When we pray to God in times of trouble, do our prayers rise up from the consciousness of redemption? Is the keynote, even in very dark hours, that of grateful trust in the Infinite Love which has attested itself to us in our redeemer Christ, or are we querulous, fretful, unbelieving? Surely it must make a difference to God, whether we come to Him thankfully, remembering His unspeakable love and kindness in delivering us from sin, and calling us to fellowship with Himself, or in dumb forgetfulness of all His grace. If God loveth a cheerful giver, He loveth also one who prays with the grateful heart of a redeemed man.

III. Let us look now to the result of this approach to God. If we follow the Apostle's advice to be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto God, then, he says, the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus. In other words, prayer can do for us what care cannot do. Care seeks for peace, but does not find it—nay, drives it inevitably away; but when the careworn soul ceases from its thoughts, and betakes itself to that grateful and confiding prayer, it is rewarded by the peace of God. We are not told that its requests are granted; it may or may not be in God's good providence for us that we should get what we think for our good, but the result is quite independent of the granting or refusing of our particular petitions. Even if we got everything we asked we might be far enough from an assured calm and happy heart; and it is this, and not any special request, that God promises to bestow. The peace of God is the peace which He gives; the peace which comes to the heart that has made God the Redeemer its confidant, and so has recovered that deep rest in His counsel and love which it had lost, and of which no prudent forethought or anxious care of its own could supply the place. It is the peace which Christ bequeathed with such solemnity to His disciples on the last evening of His life. When we remember that others ministered to Him of their substance, that He had not where to lay His head, that He had

to bear His Cross every day and at last to die upon it, we see at once that the peace of God does not mean a life of ease, without effort and pain; yet I am sure there is not one of us who would not like to have part in that legacy: 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you.' The deep calm at the bottom of Christ's heart, the peace springing from perfect knowledge of the Father, and perfect trust in Him, who would not buy a part in that, at any price?

J. DENNEY,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxvii. p. 68.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL.

The Witness of St John the Baptist to Christ.

JOHN i. 19-28.

1. THAT S. John should begin his witness to Christ with a witness to himself may seem to many unbecoming. And we will not dispute this point, but merely remark that the unseemliness of such a proceeding does not apply to the Baptist himself, but to those who forced him to it. No one ever spoke less or with greater unwillingness of himself than did the Baptist. No one pointed men so decidedly away from himself and towards Christ as he. No one would more gladly have been forgotten for Christ's sake, and this we shall soon have occasion to see. But what did it avail him? The people with whom he had to do thought very differently. The question concerning this visible Baptist lay much nearer their heart than that which concerned the yet unseen Messiah.

Such is, in the main, the mind of the world at all times. It looks much more closely at the herald of the Saviour, who preaches faith in Him by life and doctrine than at the Saviour himself, who is preached. It will rather know nothing of the latter until it has fully comprehended the former. As long as it can find anything to censure or suspect in the preacher, however groundless those suspicions may be, so long does it lull conscience to sleep, and make no further inquiry about the Saviour. It is only too ready to look upon the things of Christ as the merely private affair of him who pleads with them.

In this way is a witness to ourselves at all times linked with our witness to Christ,—a witness which will shine forth through our words and deeds. S. Peter says, in his First Epistle, chapter iii. 15th and 16th verses: 'But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and

be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.' This is a severe test of the servants of God. It requires a thorough knowledge of self, and deep humility so to put one's-self in the shade, and yet to see that nothing is overlooked. S. John stood the test nobly. This is precisely the position in which we find him in our Gospel.

Now, what did John confess? 'He confessed, I am not the Christ.' Every herald of the Saviour must make *this* clear above everything else, 'that *he* is not the one who is to give salvation.' 'I am nothing,' he says, 'but he who points out the way. Place no confidence in me, who am but flesh and blood.' John had always emphatically striven to guard against any misunderstanding in this matter, however gladly the Sanhedrim might have accepted him had he presented himself to them as the Messiah.

'I am a voice.' Oh, wonderful words, and intentionally so! 'What will ye inquire of me?' he seems to say. 'I am but a voice, through which another speaks,—the channel through which the grace of God flows to you; the voice is nothing, the call everything.' The Jews wished to turn the Baptist from the subject of his person to that of his work, although it was really nothing to them. On the contrary, his ways and means of preparing the way of the Lord were to them highly distasteful. They attached importance only to his person. They would fain have used it for their own ends, and in the light of it they were willing to rejoice for a season. 'I am a *voice*,' said John, and humbly placed himself below Him who was to be the *Word*.

II. To this very day Christians, so called, do just as did the deputies from the Sanhedrim. They all press round the Lord's herald, but they will have none of the Lord himself. The individual external churches, which ought to lead them to the Lord, too often furnish an excuse for disregarding Him. Man disputes and strives over them till he knows not to which church to turn. Therefore we must preach to you as John did, 'Seek Christ first, and afterwards examine His heralds and the various churches around you, and look out for that one which is best suited to thy needs; for until thou hast found Christ Himself thou art not fit to choose, or prefer one church before another.'

R. ROTHE,

Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 33.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Voice the Redeemer.

He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. JOHN I. 23.

TO know anything of a man, you must have some revelation of his inner life. 'Every man,' says Lacordaire, 'converses with himself, speaks to himself, and the word which he thus speaks, it is his inner life.' This inner life is the man himself. The inward transpires through the outward, unless the outward is untrue. S. John the Baptist's fame had spread abroad, and the Jews stood in doubt as to his person, who he was. He had emerged from the deserts, where he had been hidden until the days of his showing unto Israel. He had lived in solitude. He had been holding communion with God amid the wild scenery of nature. But now he stands by the waters of Jordan, and multitudes with visible emotion are listening to his appeals as he urges them to flee from the wrath to come. They saw his outer life. He appeared before them almost as an apparition. Indeed, some of the Jews had thought from the prophecy of Malachi that John was an angel in human guise. They beheld his attenuated features, his weird look, the unearthly fire which seemed to kindle in his eye, his hair-cloth garment and leathern girdle, his ascetic habits, his marvellous influence, for there 'went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan'; and thus they resolved to send a deputation to him, to ask him, '*Who* art thou?' They knew his outer life; they wanted to learn something of his inner life. They wanted, and that rightly, to know his 'position in the scale of being.' Men who move the world must give an account of themselves.

I. S. John calls himself a 'voice,' appropriating the prophecy of Isaiah. He was a voice, for he came—it was the purpose of his life—'to bear witness' to Christ. Commentators have delighted in tracing the fitness of this image. As the voice goes before the word—for we hear the outward sound before the entrance of the thought into the mind—so the 'voice' preceded the Word made Flesh; John went before the face of the Lord. He did not foretell the coming of Christ from afar, they had not to catch the echoes of his utterances across the ages of the past; he actually pointed Christ out to his disciples, when he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Moreover, the forerunner was only a voice. He did not speak his own words, but those which were suggested to him by the Spirit of God. He was the instrument upon which the finger of God played, the channel of the revelations of the Spirit. He was but a voice too, in the transientness of his ministry,

a voice 'crying in the wilderness,' soon to be silenced, when the Word Himself had manifested Himself.

S. John was a preacher of repentance. He appealed to the conscience. What is repentance? It is, first, sorrow for sin.

Further, the repentance of those who listened to the 'voice crying in the wilderness' was followed by an acknowledgment of sin; 'they were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.' The soul touched with a true sorrow seeks an outlet, a relief.

But this repentance was not complete where there was sorrow for sin in the past, and confession of sin in the present. S. John's penitents must also bring forth 'fruits meet for repentance.

II. The text further describes his work in relation to Christ. He has to 'make straight the way of the Lord.' There was something more in this than awakening man's conscience to a sense of sin. Notice, first, the need of some *immediate* preparation for receiving the Son of God, and then the nature of it.

We need some notes of warning before the occurrence of a great event, that we may be alive to its importance. On account of our dulness as to spiritual things, great matters may otherwise pass over us without our knowledge of them, or at least of their bearing upon our own lives. There is a lack of pliability in our nature. We are conscious of awkwardness if suddenly a funeral comes across our path when we are in a state of merriment. The mind and heart need to be withdrawn from one set of impressions to attend to another. Man needs preparation; must have certain dispositions of soul for approaching God.

S. John's was the proximate preparation for Christ's coming. He gave the final touch to all which had gone before. He was Christ's herald, and his work is aptly described in detail by the prophet, and succinctly in the text, under an engineering simile. He has to make ready a road for the Prince to pass by.

S. John the Baptist, in the text, is represented as exhorting the people to 'make straight the way of the Lord.' It was something not only to be done for them, but *by* them. To prepare the way of the Lord we need grace. Are we making ourselves ready for the coming of Christ? To the earthly, the proud, the untruthful, the rough-tempered, He will not manifest Himself. They have prepared no road for Him. Pray for hope, humility, sincerity, and meekness, and thus 'make straight the way of the Lord;' and His glory shall not onlv be revealed in you, but through you to others.

W. H. HUTCHINGS,
Sermons for the People, p. 78.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Unscience, not Science, adverse to the Faith.

There standeth one among you whom ye know not. S. John i. 26.

WHY is the study of physical science at this time so often adverse to the faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord? There is no doubt, alas! that it is so. A long list of eminent scientific men of old, of unimpaired faith, shows that it need not be so. It is not that the book of God's works contradicts the book of God's Word, or even that man's interpretation of the one book contradicts his interpretation of the other. They move in two different spheres, and cross each other's path only in most elementary points. The sphere of physical science is the material; the basis of a lasting peace and alliance between them is that neither should intrude into the province of the other. This is also true science; for science is *certain* knowledge based on *certain* facts. The facts on which theology rests are spiritual facts. Those of physical science are material facts. True theology precipitates nothing. It has no preconceived opinions in a province which is not its own. It cannot accept the want of proof that a thing is to be proof that it is not. On the solid foundation of rock on which it stands, it looks out securely on the conflict of human opinions, as they toss to and fro on the salt and bitter sea of this tempestuous world. Theology looks with equal impartiality on all geological theories, atomism, evolution, platonism, quietism,—provided that in whatever way it pleased our Creator to act, this be laid at the foundation, that the earth was not eternal, but was created, and that it was at His will that it passed through whatever transformations it underwent in conformity to the laws which He imposed upon it.

I. To theology, all explanations of the details of the six days of creation are indifferent. The mission of Moses was to announce the Creator to a benighted world, and that man was the work of God's hands, formed in His own likeness, bearing the stamp of His own divinity upon him, receiving his life and soul immediately from Himself. Theology has taught who gave being to all that has being. If human speculation or research thinks that it can discover in what order God created, theology leaves it to decipher God's book of nature as it stands.

Modern science in England does not for the most part deny God. But science which does not deny God may forget men. It goes back from link to link, and forgets that the chain is but a weight, unless it is fastened somewhere. Every secondary cause is at once a cause or an effect—an effect of what goes before the cause, or what

succeeds it. But where is the first cause on which it depends? Belief in the first cause or Creator belongs to man simply as the creature, not as the investigator of science. It cannot find God or the soul at the bottom of its crucible. This was the complaint of one modern eminent writer: 'I have sought for God everywhere; I find Him nowhere.' Why? Because he sought Him where he did not know how to find Him, and sought Him not where he might have found Him—in revelation or in his own soul.

II. There is, I believe, no instance in the history of the world of mankind rising unaided, and if the Moral Law, instead of being written by the Spirit of God upon our hearts, is to be the slow development of an animal, not merely we, as Christians, but the wiser heathen, who knew of these unwritten and eternal laws, would revolt against it. Whence is the power of conceiving absolute goodness without beginning, without end, countless, measureless, all-embracing, the end, the real archetype of all holiness, and of the imagination and wisdom, circling all eternity, receiving into itself all immensity, drawing to itself all infinity, the original impress of all things, in which ignorance can have no place, knowing all things, the present, past, the future, holy in itself, and of its own essence, by a true, self-depended holiness,—these conceptions are not the soul's inheritance from any ape-like ancestors, nor are they any insensible, natural conditions from them, yet these, we are told, are the true laws of our descent. Whence had Regulus his self-denial, whence had the tent-maker the zeal whereby he suffered, spoke from east to west, endured his daily loss for the well-being of his fellow-men? Whence had he the love for his own Lord which led him to count all things but loss that he might win Christ?

The world was convinced on the morrow of Calvary. Human empires grow, swell, and vanish, but the more they swell the sooner they vanish. Christ said, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me;' and the gibbet of slaves and the execrations of the world became the sceptre of His everlasting power. His empire rolled from east to west, from pole to pole. He reigns not by the infinite love alone which He showed eighteen hundred years ago on Calvary, but by the infinite love wherewith He loves every human being whom He has made. Nothing is too degraded, nothing too sunken in the mire of sin, which the divine wisdom will not seek out diligently until He find it, and finding it He rejoices, and the elevation of our degraded humanity is at once an evidence of its divine original, and His divine power to raise it, and His infinite love who thus loved it. The resurrection of each single soul is a greater marvel than the raising of Lazarus.

E. B. PUSEY,

Church of England Pulpit vol. vi. p. 234.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

First Morning Lesson.

ISAIAH XXX.

E may search through the speeches of famous orators and politicians of former ages without coming to a single maxim, a single truth, which can afford us any profitable instruction for the business and duties of common life, whereas God's prophets, although they are sent for the most part to rebuke the sins of Jewish people, are continually uttering wholesome lessons for the souls of the humblest and the meanest. They spread out a banquet for nations, but the smallest bird may come and pick up the crumbs that fall from their table.

J. C. HARE,

From Sermons in Herstmonceux Church.

ISAIAH XXXII. 15.

I. THE blessing promised. (1) Its nature. The communication of the influence of the Holy Spirit mysterious, yet real and important. (2) Its designs. Salvation of sinners through Christ. (3) Its silent, gradually widening. (4) Its necessity. The absolute and perfect failure of every other agency.

II. The manner in which the Church must seek the blessing.

(1) By rendering more conspicuous the distinction between the Church and the world. (2) By healing the breaches of the Church. (3) By active strength. (4) By prayer.

G. BROOKS,

Five Hundred Outlines, p. 273.

The Birth of Righteousness.

The work of righteousness shall be peace: and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. ISAIAH XXXII. 17.

I. THE blessing of which the prophet speaks in the text has never yet been accomplished. And why? Did the prophet see falsely? Was the vision which he saw a lying vision? Not so. If I write, the effect is wanting, it is that the cause is wanting. Were righteousness to be found upon earth peace would also be found

there. Whenever we find anything like true righteousness, according to the degree of the likeness, we also find peace. And we may feel the same undoubting confidence that whatsoever is done to promote righteousness will also promote peace.

II. It may be that the accomplishment of these promised blessings is stored up for the unborn ages of the world. It may be that the Word of God is to spread far more rapidly, and to mould and rule the hearts of men far more entirely than it has yet done; but, on the other hand, it may be that the whole race of man must pass through the gates of the grave, and that the earth itself must be purified by the fires of the last day, before the Kingdom of Christ can be established in all its power and glory. Meanwhile, this much do we know, that whatever may be the lot of the earth after we have returned to its dust, as the tree falls, so will it lie. In the state in which the soul sinks to sleep, when the darkness of death comes over it, in the same state will it come when awakened by the dawn of the resurrection. If we have not found righteousness, we shall not find peace.

J. C. HARE,

Herstmonceux Sermons, vol. i. p. 325.

Quiet Resting-Places.

And in quiet resting places. ISAIAH xxxii. 18.

THIS prophecy was uttered in a time of *un*quietness. The Assyrian was expected with his invading army. The cloud of war was gathering dark on the horizon. Everything portended trouble and distress—possible captivity and destruction. The people were looking eagerly for help, but it was the help of an arm of flesh. In this emergency the prophet voice is heard—'Look not to Egypt but to God! The Assyrian will come, but his power shall be broken, and you shall still dwell in peace.' Then looking still further in his vision he foresees the captivity in Babylon, but also the return from it, a peaceable resettlement in Jerusalem, a time of religious revival, and continued safety even amid surrounding troubles.

But it is impossible to doubt that the vision of the prophet was extended into a far more illustrious future; and that now and again in describing those nearer scenes he obtains and reveals glimpses of a higher glory, and refreshes his readers and himself with anticipations of Messiah's times. The closing verses of the chapter are full of the Gospel, penetrated with the very spirit of evangelical peace. Hardly in the New Testament shall we find more intense or more beautiful expressions, and we see in them the very process by which individuals, and communities now, are brought under the power of the truth, and

into the enjoyment of spiritual rest—the pouring out of the Spirit from on high, the changing of wilderness into fruitful field, the workings of righteousness, the flowings of peace. 'And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.' '*My people*' seems to make the promise general, and to hold it out to us sealed with the 'yea and amen' which is attached to every promise of God. '*Shall dwell*' seems to import some settled order of divine procedure; and, therefore, we are quite in the spirit of the text in asking what these resting-places are, where and how we may hope to find them, and how secure in them the promised sure abode.

I. *The Evening.*—The close of each day should bring over the soul some shadow of solemnity and rest. A sacred time even in Eden was 'the cool of the day.' Isaac went out into the field to meditate 'at eventide.' Jesus often left His disciples about sundown, and wandered up among the Syrian hills to find some sequestered spot where He might feel Himself alone in the full presence of God. The breeze that fanned the leaves of Paradise will touch our cheek, and make coolness at the close of our day, if we will but cease from care and sin. The same sun shines and sets on us which lightened and left the patriarchs day by day so long ago. The same night shadows us that gathered around the Saviour of the world. And the same soul-rest will be ours if we seek it 'when even is now come.'

There are thousands of busy men who pass this 'quiet resting-place' and never see it. They seem not to know that it is 'the shadow of the Almighty,' the silent footstep of His nearer presence. But to many a one the evening is a daily deliverance and salvation, a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. And is there any sufficient reason to make the evening not so much to you? If God has placed you so in His providence that you *cannot* have it in quietness for meditation and prayer, then He will compensate you for the loss. You shall be no loser by doing your duty. He will nourish your soul by other means, and give you rest in other ways. There are not a few who are in this predicament, to whom the evening is but the prolongation of the day; who *must*, in strength or weariness, hold on at the task until it is done: who must, late as well as early, stand in their place, or see it taken by another. To a devout soul the evening is like 'the secret place of the Most High.' It is 'the shadow of the Almighty.' It is a closet of which God builds the walls and shuts-to the door. It is a quiet resting-place in which the soul may soothe weariness, recruit strength, look on the face of purity, and grow up into the image of God.

II. *The Sabbath* is a 'quiet resting-place.' In the beginning God rested from His work, and blessed and hallowed the day for all time,

and never has there been a Sabbath on earth in which men have not been entering into the very rest of God. Like all His gifts it has been much perverted. To some it has been only dark bondage—a day on which the 'heavy burdens' have become heavier still. To others it has been a day for licence and frivolity—the worst, and not the best of the seven. To most on earth, alas! it is little or nothing different from other days. But believing and penitential souls greet the first day of the week with fear and great joy. Amid the toils and cares of the other days, many of them long for its coming round, and to them it returns with a brightness caught from the heaven out of which it seems to have rolled; with a calmness drawn from the Sabbath of eternity which it types; with a healing put into it by the hand of the Physician of Souls. To spend a Sabbath well is of necessity to make it 'a peaceable habitation, a sure dwelling, *a quiet resting-place*.'

III. *The providential change* may be of such a character as to lead us at once into a 'quiet resting-place,' prepared for us by Him who brings the evening and the Sabbath in their season. It may be a change of locality, or of occupation, or of condition. We are in the habit of saying, that change of place is not change of mind. In the deepest sense, no doubt, this is true, and yet a considerable change is produced, sometimes, in the state of the mind, simply by moving from one place to another. The ascent of a high mountain lays not only the valleys and lesser hills far beneath us, but also cares and toils, and even some of the more serious responsibilities of human life. For the brief hour of our stay we are etherealized. We forget yesterday, and take no thought for to-morrow. We get back, then, some of the pure simplicity of childhood; we draw down something of the angelic life. No recorded death is more sublime than that of Moses on the lone mountain-top.

Any considerable providential change has something of the same character. An infant is born, and in his first sleep sheds through the house something of the solemnity of being. A child is 'recovered of his sickness,' in which the little pilgrim seemed to be wandering away from all your care and love. A son has gone out to a foreign land. A daughter has been married. Anything that breaks the continuity, that alters the relationships, that makes a pause in life —an open space in the forest of its toils and cares—anything of that kind is God's voice, saying, 'Here is relief for you. Enter this quiet resting-place which my hand has made. By thought recollect yourself. By faith recover yourself. By prayer strengthen yourself for the way, the work, and the warfare which are before you still.'

IV. *The grave* is a quiet resting-place. 'There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small

and great are there, and the servant is free from his master. There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest.' This is man's '*long home*.' Other homes are but like calling-places, in which the wayfaring man tarries for a few days and nights in pursuing the great journey; but in this 'long home' 'man lieth down and riseth not, till the heavens be no more; they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.'

It is Christ who hallows the grave. He has been a sleeper there; He has taken the harshness, the disquietude, the terror away. From that rock-tomb on Calvary 'where the Lord lay,' a light has been shed into every Christian's grave, and thence has flowed that sweet tranquillity which seems now to hover about all the places where His people lie at rest. It is therefore not an exercise of our fancy, but a rational and great triumph of our faith, when we can divest death of its natural terrors, and the grave of its cold repulsiveness—surrounding it with richer and happier associations. It is not now the gloomy portal to a dark and unknown world. It is not now in the devil's keeping; it is the property of Christ, one of the homes of His people—a quiet resting-place, where, after the fever and toil of these mortal days, they may lie in stillness for a little while, until He prepares another home, another quiet resting-place, the last, the best of all—in heaven.

V. Heaven is the quietest resting-place of all. Ere the inferior, the unconscious part of the man is laid in the grave, the nobler, the immortal part, has gone to the last, the perfect rest, which remaineth for the people of God. Of that resting-place we can know little or nothing here. Christ will prepare it, and to all who are prepared for it will in due time secure its everlasting enjoyment. The preparation for it will be achieved in the diligent use of the other resting-places which are opened to us as we pass on our way.

A. RALEIGH,
Quiet Resting-Places, p. 1.

The King in His Beauty.

Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. ISAIAH XXXIII. 17.

IT is astonishing how much comfort can be packed up in a few words. There is a concentration of glory in these words which could not easily be expressed in briefer form. If one were asked to put into a single sentence the entire body of Scriptural prophecy, of Old and New Testament prophecy combined, he could not easily find a more complete condensation of the whole than in the text. The

King in His beauty is the supreme object of vision: the land that is very far off is the ultimate possession. We cannot go above the one in our thoughts: we cannot go beyond the other in our desires. Old Testament prophecy culminates in a King who is to reign in righteousness: 'a man who is to be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' And New Testament prophecy culminates in One who is reigning even now at the right hand of God in heaven, and in whom the Divine purpose, as it pertains not only to eternity, but also to time, shall yet be abundantly realised. The whole hope and joy of the world is gathered up into predictions such as these.

There are two points of view from which we may look at the text. The objective aspect, or the vision as it is set before us; the moral and spiritual ideal yet to be realised. The subjective aspect; or what is implied in seeing the vision, in realising the ideal.

I. *The vision itself*: 'The King in His beauty: the land that is very far off.'

'The King in His beauty.' There is only one Person to whom these words can refer. 'The King in His beauty' is Jesus Christ. The words are striking. It is not exactly the King in His majesty, or grandeur, or glory, or power, but 'the King in His beauty.' We speak of the good and the beautiful and the true. And there is a singular accordance between those three super-excellent realities We think of them in connection with the Persons in the Godhead. While it is true that all glory and power of the one aspect of the Divine Being belongs to the other, still we are permitted to make a distinction in our thoughts, and we think of the Father as that One in whom we see pre-eminently the good; and the Son as that One in whom we see specifically the beautiful; and the Spirit as that One in whom we see pre-eminently the true.

The beauty of Christ is seen in all things, not merely that He comes into adaptation to our nature as man, but that He comes into contact with our condition as sinners, and in a sense becomes sin for us; becomes dark—the All-Beautiful One becomes dark, and sorrowful, and poor for us; yea, if I may so speak, Christ becomes unsightly for us, in order that the beauty of heaven, the beauty of our essential human nature, which had been all defaced and deformed by sin, might shine out again in more than its pristine loveliness. The marvel of our redemption is that it became God, the All-Beautiful One, in the person of His Son, to do all this for us; it was in profoundest harmony with what He is in Himself that God by His Son should suffer and die for us. It is the very mystery of love, and it is beautiful as love itself.

Society is at present a hideous discord (at least to a very large extent). We cannot say that it is beautiful. There are gaps and fissures in it not pleasant to behold. Nor is the earth in all its parts a garden of the Lord. But it is not more certain that Jesus Christ is King; and that we hold to be absolutely certain; it is not more certain that He is the centre of heaven's harmony, than it is certain that the far-off land will yet be brought nigh and made visible upon the earth; and that God's will shall be done upon the earth, even as it is done in heaven.

II. And now a few words more on *the subjective aspect, or what is implied in seeing the vision, in realising the ideal*, the realisation of which on our part is what is implied in our seeing 'the King in His beauty, and the land that is far very off.' The time is coming when every human being shall actually look upon Jesus Christ. He is the appointed Judge of all men, and we must all appear before His judgment-seat. What an impressive thought that is! The founders of other religions, whatever their merits or demerits, however great the extent of their pretensions and claims, must come at last before Christ to be judged by Him. Confucius and Zoroaster, Buddha, and Mohammed: whatever the character and influence of those other so-called religions of the world may be, baneful or beneficial, they must all be brought at last to the bar of that perfect standard which we have in Christ alone. Every man shall be brought to look at last upon the now invisible Christ, and to stand face to face with our eternal destiny there at the bar of the Redeemer. But to *look* is not always to *see* all that can be *seen*. To see the King in His beauty implies a deeper seeing than that of merely looking upon Him. It implies a being made like Him. In order to see the kingdom of God, or to enter into it, we must actually be born again. We must ourselves (in other words) be a part of that which we truly see. We shall see Him at last because we shall have been made like Him. It is the pure in heart who see God. This seeing of God is our heaven in its highest and most complete form; and it is by faith in Christ that we are brought to this perception. And it is quite clear that only as we see the King in His beauty, only as we individually and collectively come near to God in Christ, can we bring about the good time, that blessed golden future, for which we all, it is to be hoped, struggle and pray. When we ourselves have returned from the far country we find heaven, even now, to be at the door. We are actually hastening the day when the land that is very far off shall be a state of society realised all around us. We are no longer strangers and foreigners, but of the very citizenship of the saints of the household of faith.

F. FERGUSON,

British Weekly Pulpit, vol. ii. p. 249.

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

Jesus our Refuge.

(FOR A CHILDREN'S SERMON.)

And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest. ISAIAH xxxii. 2.

AMONG the many pleasant places in which a winter or summer holiday may be agreeably spent, the Isle of Man is a great favourite with many persons. In winter its climate is so mild and genial that snow and ice are rarely seen. Roses of various kinds, as well as many other flowers, may be gathered for the Christmas tables, while myrtles, calceolarias, and the spreading fuchsia trees, which form a bower over many cottage doors, seem to be quite at home amid the short January days, or the long, dark wintry nights. But summer is the time in which to see the Isle of Man in its glory. It is then that its thickly-wooded glens, abounding in the choicest ferns, and musical with the sound of white waterfalls; its grand hills, clothed with bright purple heather, and rich in wild-flowers of many hues; its pure bracing air, and its deep sea, clear as crystal, laughing against the rocks of tiny coves, or spreading itself out in graceful, wide-sweeping bays, draw away from smoky towns and close, crowded cities thousands of pale and tired workers, to rest a while in its warm sunlight, and then to go back again to the hard work of life, browned in face, merry in spirit, and strong in heart.

In one of those beautiful bays there stands ever present to the view, on a group of jagged rocks, a castle-like building, known to every visitor to Douglas as 'the Tower of Refuge.' It was built upon this dangerous reef as a place of safety at high water, and as a beacon for mariners. Whether the magnificent bay sleeps in peace in the warm summer sunshine, while little children wade bare-legged along its shores, pushing their tiny boats out into its smooth clear waters, or the wild storm-waves hurl the white foam over the topmost turret of the refuge; whether, in the hush of the night, the pale moon makes a glittering pathway far across the deep, or the morning sun casts a warm rosy glow over sea and land, there stands the friendly tower, the chief object in the seaward view from half the windows in the busy little town.

Now what the Tower of Refuge is to those who look out upon Douglas Bay, Jesus should be to all of us, ever in our view. In Him we shall find all we desire, and far more than we can ask or think.

I. First, let us remember that Jesus is our great refuge from *trouble* and *sorrow*. Sorrow is like a storm at sea when the winds

rise high, and the wild waves break the ship in pieces. In such an hour we need to pray, 'Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.' Even children feel how great is their need of a place of comfort and refuge when they are in trouble, and many of us have found in the arms of a loving mother such a refuge.

II. Then Jesus is our refuge from *fear*. There are many things that make us afraid, and Jesus is a refuge from them all.

Sin makes us afraid. When we sin we know that God is angry, and that we are in great danger.

Our sins make the storm of God's anger gather above us, and then we are rightly afraid, for 'Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.'

But Jesus is a safe shelter from this storm. He has 'tasted death for every man,' and those who come to Him are, like Noah in the ark, unhurt by the storm that falls on the head of the wicked, for 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.'

Death is another thing that makes us afraid. But Jesus is a refuge from the fear of death, and if we fly to Him for salvation we shall rather rejoice than fear when death is at hand.

III. He is a refuge for *all* who will come to Him. He is *able* to save all.

On the 19th of August 1880, a ship named the 'Gartconnel,' while sailing between the island of Java and Queensland, came into collision with a German vessel called the 'Christel,' and sank, but not before the crew had been able to scramble on to the deck of the 'Christel.' This vessel was also badly damaged, and drifted to and fro on the wide ocean for four days before any assistance came to hand. At length a small English vessel, the 'Ogmore,' seeing their disabled condition, came to help them. The ship, however, was small, and the captain could only offer to receive on board a limited number of the crew of the foundered vessel, and so lots were cast to decide who should be received and who should be left behind. Those who were fortunate enough to be winners were then received into the 'Ogmore,' and in due time were safely landed in England, while, alas! the rest had to be left behind.

But in Jesus, the great Refuge, there is room for *all*. Millions of distressed souls have found a safe refuge in Him, and 'yet there is room.' And while He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, He is as *willing* as He is able.

R. BREWIN,
Gospel Sermons for Children, p. 1.

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES.

Christ's Coming for Judgment

A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. S. Luke xix. 12.

A PREVAILING subject in our Redeemer's thoughts was His future return to judgment. What is altogether certain, *this* is the one great event, yet future, which most concerns ourselves; and as such, finds most frequent place in our Lord's discourses.

I. First, it is obvious to recall the many occasions when our Saviour openly alluded to His second coming. They will be observed to abound most at the close of His ministry. To these may be added the many places where the day of judgment is introduced to our notice without hint, or warning, or explanation of any kind.

II. A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. The sum of all history is *that*. The world's multitudinous and diversified annals may be reduced after all to that. There is but one point in the future to which we have need to direct our earnest vision; the day, namely, in which, having received the kingdom, the nobleman told of in the parable will return. How comes it to pass that, admitting the truth of what has been spoken, we practically show ourselves so neglectful of it? We read history by the lights of our own fancy. We overlook the solemn truth that it is all to be read by the light of one saying of the text. We distress ourselves about the future of our own lives, and review the accidents (as we term them) of days that are past. But it seems to be seldom considered that the gracious design of all that has befallen us was to enable us to become heirs of the same kingdom. And we pray in effect for our own perfection, as well as for our Lord's second coming, as often as we say, 'Thy kingdom come!'

J. W. BURGON,
Ninety-one Short Sermons, No. v.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Prepare for Seasons of Grace.

And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you. JOSHUA iii. 5.

THE grace of God at all times awaits, forecomes, accompanies, follows, encompasses us. It is within us, and without us. It comes to us through ordinances, and without them. It never fails us, if we never fail it. It is the life of the soul, as the soul is of the body. God upholds the body in life; Himself is the life of the soul. If we are not naked in God's sight, it is the robe which clothes us. When Adam lost it, he became miserably naked, and hid himself. If we are not blind, it is the Light which, streaming down through the windows of heaven from the Sun of Righteousness, enlightens us. It is all in all to us. It is Light, and Life, and Peace, and Comfort, and Joy, and Fire of Love, for it is the Presence of God in the soul: It is the Comforter, the Father and the Son making their abode in the soul through the Spirit.

I. But although grace is ever around and in those who have not finally rejected it, there are special seasons at which it comes to individuals and to the Church; seasons in which grace does not only trickle down as the dew, but runs down like a river, sweeping away all the barriers of earthliness, and bearing us onward like a tide; seasons which if we miss, we know not what we lose; the wave has passed by, and we who might have been borne upon its crest, and carried safe, are tossing to and fro in a perilous sea. Such seasons, to individuals, are the first drawings of the child's tender soul to God; its first stirrings at the thought that it is not a citizen of this earth, that it belongs to heaven, to eternity, to God; its first yearning to go forth out of itself to be for ever God's.

Such to the Christian Church was that day in which it was first formed, that special outpouring of the Spirit, when a people of the Lord 'was born' at once, and God the Holy Ghost came to dwell in the Church of Christ, never again to depart from it. Such have been the cleansings of persecutions, the inroads of Anti-Christs, the rendings of heretics, the scourges of God, or the endurance and blood of martyrs; Christ's life in His saints; His preachers of repentance; everything whereby He has made known His Presence, and said to His Church when slumbering through ease, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'

Such, again, in a more peaceful way, both to Churches, and us their single members, are, year by year, the seasons of the great mysteries of the faith. There is *then* a closer intercommunion between heaven and earth, when God the Son came down from heaven to be Man

with men, and make our earth a seed-plot for heaven; or God died, that men might live; or Man, in God, sat on the right hand of God.

II. But although He comes to all alike who look for Him, He doth not come alike to all. He filleth all; but all do not alike contain Him. He, the same, dwelleth in the Seraphim, on fire with love, and close around His throne, and in the poorest, weakest penitent; but not in the same way. As is the vessel, so is the 'new wine' of the Spirit, which it containeth. All may alike be full, yet all have not the same largeness. As is the longing, so is the gift. 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' The wider the mouth of the soul is opened by thirsting desire for God, the more largely will He fill it. Our capacity to receive Him, is our longing for Him. The greater the hunger of the soul after righteousness, the more will He feed and satisfy it who is our Righteousness.

And so, whenever God would draw near to man, He would have man prepare for that awful nearness. We cannot on the instant change our whole tone of mind.

How, then, shall we prepare to meet Him? How to receive Him? In the same way wherein He cometh to us. And how cometh He? In great humility, as a little child. He cometh to give us of His Majesty, but only if we receive His humility; He cometh to be born in us, but only if we, in Him, die to the world; He who 'dwelleth in the highest Heaven and inhabiteth Eternity,' cometh to dwell in us, but only if we be of a 'contrite and humble spirit,' 'to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'

This is indeed 'a night much to be observed unto the Lord,' a night full of light, in which 'light shone on us that walked in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death;' a light, unto which that created light, and the very 'glory of the Lord' which shone round about the shepherds, is but darkness. Light which, if we follow it, shall lead us to the land of everlasting light and glory; Light which 'shall shine in the darkness of our hearts,' 'more and more until the perfect day.'

E. B. PUSEY,
Parochial Sermons, p. 35.

The Birth of Benjamin

And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name Benoni; but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. GENESIS XXXV. 18, 19.

AS Christmas-time comes nearer, and our minds are fuller of the preparation for it, it seems natural that our thoughts turn backwards rather than forwards; and while through the last three

weeks we have sought to prepare our souls to meet Him at His Second Coming, we now allow our memories to go back to the grace and sweetness of His First Coming. Hitherto our ears have been filled with the denunciations of the coming judgment; not until now have we heard the voice of mercy prevailing, rejoicing against judgment, as S. James calls it. In truth, it is those who have learnt to fear His judgment beforehand, now in the time of this mortal life, who will have the best hopes for His mercy in that day when He shall appear; but, on the other hand, our hope of mercy in that day depends upon the work that began when He came not with the clouds of heaven, but as a little Child new-born in Bethlehem.

I. The name Bethlehem is met with for the first time, as for the last, in the story of a birth. 'Of Zion it shall be reported,' says the Psalm, 'that this or that man was born there;' but of the earlier city of David, his own city before he ever came to Zion, the same might still more truly be said—that its fame rested on the men that were born in her, whose name the Lord would Himself rehearse when He writeth up the people. One whole book of the Bible has no other subject but to tell how the chosen Mother was guided to Bethlehem, and how she there brought forth her firstborn Son; and that story serves only to lead on to the birth of Him after whom Bethlehem received a new name, and who first made it famous in Israel. From the tale of Boaz and Ruth and their son Obed, we pass on to the names of Jesse and David.

Of all that we read in the Book of Genesis of the faith of the Patriarchs, there are few examples that shine forth more strongly than this of Jacob's in the name that he gave his son; being able to look beyond the present sorrow to the power of God that was to be revealed. But for that faith, no doubt he might well have been content to have left the mother's name unchanged. The child was a son of his sorrow no less than of hers. But he knew not only from whom the sorrow came, but whereto He had promised that all sorrows should lead: in Jacob's seed all families of the earth were to be blessed; and as each of his sons was born, even to this last, he would rejoice as feeling that the blessing came nearer and was multiplied. It was indeed in an elder son's line that the blessing came, but he who carried it to all the families of the earth was of the race of the youngest; the Apostle of the Gentiles, the preacher of the righteousness of faith, was a man of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin.

II. It became Him who was to be known as a Man of Sorrows to come as a Child of sorrows; but He was not only born in sorrow Himself, he was a son of His Mother's sorrow too. We bless Him for His condescension that, as He died in agony, so He was born in

discomfort; but let us not forget that she who was most His own shared with Him in both. As at the last the sword went through her soul when she stood by the cross of Jesus, so from the first she was made partaker of Him who had not where to lay His head; she was homeless herself, while she borrowed a home for Him, not from those He had come to save, but from the meaner creatures that His Father had made to serve them, and who now refused not to serve Him. Her loneliness teaches us scarcely less than His; for whereas He had a work to do that we cannot share in, her work was altogether the same as ours, so that her example comes the more closely home to us. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He has sent;' she by whom He sent Him was the first believer, the first blessed through faith in Him, and so her story points to us the way to attain by like faith to like blessedness. For her Son to be homeless was a part of the suffering He undertook for our sake, and by its merit avails for our profit; but she was only one of ourselves, a believer as we are or ought to be; and therefore if she was a wanderer with Him, and suffered with Him, we are taught that we must suffer with Him before we can reign with Him. All her true blessedness came from the same cause only, because she did keep His sayings in her heart. So, if she found her Son in the same way that we have to find Him, we may take her as our guide into the path that leads to Him. If Christ is to be formed in us, we must seek Him by the same way as the woman in the wilderness, as the Pilgrim to Bethlehem, for whom there was no room in the inn. A certain holy bishop always desired that he might die at an inn (and he had his wish), for, he said, it was an image to a man of his proper state in this world,—as a traveller away from home, in a place where he only tarries for a day, and which demands that he leaves a payment for what he receives there. He doubtless was wise in this, and lived in the true pilgrim's spirit; yet the truest likeness of all to Jesus was in the traveller who had not even such a place of rest as this.

III. Outwardly indeed we are not as Mary was: rich or poor as one of us may be in comparison with another, we all at least have a home of our own—all, or nearly all, of us are looking to find in our homes, when Christmas comes, some portion of Christmas happiness. And if for our homes and the happiness we find there we give God thanks, and show, as we are able, charity to our neighbours, then our happiness will be blessed and sanctified, and in our joys as well as in our sorrows the Son born in sorrow will save us with the strength of His right hand. Yet even in the sacred joy of His birth let us not forget the sorrow of it, if only because there are members of His and brethren of ours in sorrow when we rejoice, and homeless when we are safe at home. And not only as a matter of charity towards

men ought we to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; even for our own salvation's sake, for likeness to Christ or for true love to Christ, it is necessary to have known the mystery of sorrow. Blessed are those to whom He has sent this better wisdom, even against their will; more blessed are those to whom He has both made joy easy and abundant, and given grace to choose sorrow, that they may lighten the lot of the sorrowful by sharing it.

But not only sorrow generally is a discipline to faith and a means for growth in holiness: this special trouble of the wanderer and the homeless is one which it specially befits us that we should learn to know and feel. For however perfect happiness God may have given us on earth, this world or any place in it is not our real home after all: 'Here have we no abiding city, but we seek one to come.' It is true He has not yet called us to leave the world altogether, even as Rachel lived on in her father's country for thirteen years after her marriage, yet feeling a stranger to him and belonging only to her husband. But one day we must leave it, and we must have learned beforehand to find a home wherever He is who loved us, if our departure is to be with joy, and according to the old bridal blessing, 'From home to home.' This also we know, that our trial is not so hard as Rachel's, for the Bridegroom of the Christian's soul is more faithful and loving even than hers. We shall not be apart from Him even for one night. He teaches us to wrestle by His side at Jabbok; He will teach us at Penuel to look upon the face of God. He will bring us over Jordan into the land of Canaan, but not that we may be, like Jacob, strangers and pilgrims there, not that we should perish there and disappoint His love.

Our Jacob has entered already into the house of His everlasting Father, and there He has prepared for His beloved an everlasting mansion of life.

W. H. SIMCOX,
The Cessation of Prophecy, p. 11.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Cheerfulness. Phil. iv. 4

Sydney Smith, when a poor curate at Foston-le-Clay, a dreary, desolate place, wrote: 'I am resolved to like it, and to reconcile myself to it, which is more manly than to fancy myself above it, and to send up complaints by post of being thrown away, or being desolate, or such-like trash.' And he acted up to this, said his prayers, made his jokes, did his duty, and upon fine mornings used to draw up the blinds of his parlour, open the window, and 'glorify the room,' as he called the operation, with sunshine.

But all the sunshine outside was nothing to the sunshine within the heart.

Christian Joy. PHIL. iv. 4. MR. FROUDE, in his *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, defends the Scottish Reformers from the charge of being a morose, melancholy people. He says: 'I should rather say that the Scots had been an unusually happy people. Intelligent industry, the honest doing of daily work, with a sense that it must be well done, under penalties; the necessaries of life moderately provided for, and a sensible content with the situation of life in which men are born—this through the week, and at the end of it "The Cottar's Saturday night"—the homely family, gathered reverently and peacefully together, and irradiated with a sacred presence;—Happiness! such happiness as we human creatures are likely to know upon this world, will be found there, if anywhere.'

Joy in Sorrow. PHIL. iv. 4. WHEN Richard Williams, of the Patagonian Mission, with his few companions, was stranded on the beach by a high tide, and at the beginning of the terrible privations which terminated his life, he wrote in his diary: 'I bless and praise God that this day has been, I think, *the happiest of my life.* The fire of Divine love has been burning on the mean altar of my breast, and the torch light of faith has been in full trim, so that I have only had to wave it to the right hand or left, in order to discern spiritual things in heavenly places.' Later, when severe illness was added to circumstantial distress, he could say: 'Not a moment sits wearily upon me. Sweet is the presence of Jesus; and oh, I am happy in His love.' Again, though held fast by fatal disease, he wrote: 'Ah, I am happy day and night, hour by hour. Asleep or awake, I am happy beyond the poor compass of language to tell.'

Prayer and Praise. PHIL. iv. 4. THE prayer that prevails is a reflected promise. Our office in prayer is but to receive on our hearts the bright rays of God's Word, and to flash them back from the polished surface to the heaven from whence they came.

Prayer. PHIL. iv. 6. As one of the old mystics called prayer 'the flight of the lonely man to the only God,' so we may call the act of faith the meeting of the soul alone with Christ alone.

Prayer and Praise. PHIL. iv. 6. As late as 1830 there was a beautiful custom in the city of Los Angeles, in Mexico. Throughout the town in all the families, the oldest member of the family—oftenest the grandfather or grandmother—would rise every

morning at the appearing of the morning star, and at once strike up a hymn. At the first note every person in the house would rise, or sit up in bed, and join in the song. From house to house, and from street to street, the singing spread: and the volume of music swelled, until it was as if the whole town sung.

Prayer. PHIL. iv. 6. 'VENICE may well call upon us to note with reverence, that of all the towers which are still seen rising like a branchless forest from her islands, there is but one whose office was other than that of summoning to prayer, and that one was a watch-tower only.'

Prayer. PHIL. iv. 6. AT the battle of Chester, in 607 A.D., there were two thousand monks who followed the British army to the field against Ethelfrith, king of Northumbria. For three days they had fasted in their monastery at Bangor, imploring the help of Heaven for their country. Ethelfrith watched the wild gestures and outstretched arms of the weird company as it stood apart, intent upon prayer, taking them for enchanters. 'Bear they arms or no,' said the king, 'they war against us when they cry to their God;' and in the surprise and rout that followed, the monks were the first to fall.

Praying Aloud. PHIL. iv. 6. 'IT is sometimes very salutary to pray aloud. The sound of one's own voice is cheering and rousing. When, in health and strength, we are walking in a solitary place, on the mountain or on the seashore, it is astonishing what force it gives to prayer when we venture to converse with our God audibly—sometimes even with a shout of praise.'

Prayer, the Habit of. PHIL. iv. 6. STONEWALL JACKSON having once used the expression 'instant in prayer,' was asked what was his idea of its meaning. 'I will give you,' he said, 'my idea of it by illustration if you will allow it, and will not think that I am setting myself up as a model for others.' On being assured that there would be no misjudgment, he went on to say, 'I have so fixed the habit in my own mind that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without a moment's asking of God's blessing. I never seal a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal. I never take a letter from the post without a brief sending of my thoughts heavenward. I never change my classes in the section room without a minute's petition on the cadets who go out and those who come in.' 'And don't you sometimes forget this?' 'I think I can say that I scarcely do: *the habit has become* almost as fixed as breathing.'

ILLUSTRATIONS

Prayer. PHIL. iv. 6.

ON assuming the governorship of the Soudan, a province half as large again as France, desolated by the slave-traders, whom it was to be his work to put down, Gordon wrote: 'No man ever had a harder task than I, unaided, have before me, but it sits as a feather on me. As Solomon asked, I ask wisdom to govern this great people; and not only will He give it, but all else besides.'

Ejaculatory Prayer. PHIL. iv. 6.

EJACULATORY prayer is the Christian's breath; his secret path to his hiding-place; his express to heaven in circumstances of difficulty and peril. It is the tuner of all his religious feelings; it is his sling and stone, with which he slays the enemy ere he is aware of it; it is the hiding of his strength; and of every religious performance, it is the most convenient. Ejaculatory prayer is like the rope of a belfry; the bell is in one room and the handle or the end of the rope which sets it a-ringing in another. Perhaps the bell may not be heard in the apartment where the rope is, but it is heard in its own apartment. Moses laid hold of the rope and pulled it hard on the shore of the Red Sea; and though no one heard or knew anything of it in the lower chamber, the bell rang loudly in the upper one, till the whole place was moved, and the Lord said: 'Wherefore criest thou unto Me?'

Prayer with Thanksgiving. PHIL. iv. 6.

IT seems to me that five minutes of real thankfulness for the love of our dear Saviour is worth a year of hard reasoning on the hidden parts of our redemption.

Thankfulness. PHIL. iv. 6.

CHRYSOSTOM ended his life in exile, the result of his faithfulness, and dragged by two soldiers towards the wild village at the foot of the Caucasus, which was designated as his place of banishment, breathed his last with the words, 'Thanks be to God for all things!'

Thanksgiving. PHIL. iv. 6.

OF the last days of the Venerable Bede, his disciple Cuthbert wrote: 'He was much troubled with shortness of breath, yet without pain before the day of our Lord's resurrection, that is, for about a fortnight, and thus he afterwards passed his life cheerful and rejoicing, giving thanks to Almighty God every day and night, nay every hour, till the day of our Lord's ascension, and daily read lessons to us His disciples; and whatever remained of the day he spent in singing psalms. He also passed all the night awake in joy and thanksgiving, unless a short sleep prevented it, in which case he no sooner awoke than he presently repeated his wonted exercises, and ceased not to give thanks to God with uplifted hands.

I declare with truth that I have never seen with my eyes nor heard with my ears any man so earnest in giving thanks to the living God.'

Thanksgiving to God. PHIL. iv. 6.

'BY God's grace I am well,' is the constant answer, says a missionary in Bengal, of native Christians when their health is inquired after and they happen to be well. Is not this an improvement upon the English Christian's 'Thank *you*.'

Thanksgiving with Prayer. PHIL. iv. 6.

A CHILD knelt at the accustomed time to thank God for the mercies of the day, and pray for His care through the coming night. Then as usual came the 'God bless mother and ——' But the prayer was stilled, the little hands unclasped, and a look of sadness and wonder met the mother's eye, as the words of helpless sorrow came from the lips of the kneeling child, 'I cannot pray for father any more.'

Since her little lips had been able to form the dear name, she had prayed for a blessing upon it. It had followed close after her mother's name. But now he was dead. I waited for some moments, and then urged her to go on. Her pleading eyes met mine, and with a voice that faltered, she said: 'O mother, I cannot leave him all out; let me say, "Thank God that I had a dear father once;" so I can still go on and keep him in my prayers.' And so she still continues to do, and my heart learned a lesson from the loving ingenuity of my child. Remember to thank God for mercies past as well as to ask blessings for the future.

Thanksgiving. PHIL. iv. 6.

THERE is no such effectual way of begging as thanksgiving. God is offended when we are loud and clamorous in asking favours, but dumb and tongue-tied in returning thanks. Need will make us beggars, but grace only thanksgivers.

The Heavenly Home. ISA. xxxiii. 17.

OUR Father is leading us home: and the more rough and rugged the road near its close, the more we relish the greensward beyond the grave. Could we look upwards with a steadier and more ardent eye, we should scarce feel the fluctuations of this changeable scene. When a man feels dizzy, in riding through a torrent, by looking down on the stream, the best way to restore his head to calmness is to fix his eye on the stationary objects on the other side of the river.

The best Beginning. ISA. xxxiii. 22.

DR. DUNCAN, of the New College, Edinburgh, in conversation once with a lady, addressed these remarkable words to her:—'It 's a *grand* thing to begin at the beginning,—to begin with the Lord as our Maker, and to learn who

and what He is, Jehovah, I Am; and then to learn of Him as the Lawgiver; and then to meet Him as a Judge, and to be reconciled to His holy law,—to hear Him pronounce the curse that we deserve, and to say Amen to it; and then to lie at His feet, confessing that hell is our due, and lying there, to take at His own hand, Christ, instead of hell,—Christ free, instead of hell deserved. That's just salvation, and no way but that will do for you or me. Try to get it fresh on your conscience every day, that hell is your desert, and that you take Christ instead.'

A Christian King. Isa. xxxiii. 22. Three centuries ago the Spaniards were besieging the little town of St. Quentin, on the frontiers of France. Its ramparts were in ruins, fever and famine were decimating its defenders, treason was gliding among its terrified population. One day the Spaniards shot over the walls a shower of arrows, to which were attached little slips of parchment, promising the inhabitants that if they would surrender, their lives and property should be spared. Now, the governor of the town was the great leader of the Huguenots, Gaspard de Coligni. As his sole answer he took a piece of parchment, tied it to a javelin, wrote on it the two words *Regem habemus* —'We have a king'—and hurled it back into the camp of the enemy. There was his sole answer to all their threats and all their seductions Now that was true loyalty—loyalty in imminent peril, loyalty ready to sacrifice all. But who was that king for whom, amidst sword and flame, amid fever and famine, Coligni was defending those breached and battered walls? It was the weak and miserable Henry II. of France, whose son, Charles IX., was afterwards guilty of the murder of Coligni and the infamies of St. Bartholomew.

Have you a king? Is Christ your King? Ah, if He be, He is not a feeble, corrupt, false, treacherous man like Coligni's master, but a King who loves you, who died for you, who pleads with you even now on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Are you loyal to Him as Coligni was to the wretched Henry II.? Are you loyal at all —much more, would you be loyal to Christ, even unto death? If so, what will you do for Him? That is the test.

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